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# GOD

## Makes the Difference

STUDIES IN  
THE FAITH OF NATURE  
AND THE NATURE OF FAITH

by

Edwin McNeill Poteat



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GOD MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

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EDWIN MCNEILL POTEAT

Raleigh, North Carolina  
September, 1950



GOD  
MAKES THE DIFFERENCE





## *Chapter I*

### The Faith of Nature and the Nature of Faith

[ 1 ]

THE war between science and religion is over. Except in certain remote salients to which the cease fire command has not reached, or where there are snipers who, fascinated by the report of a gun, are simply using up their ammunition, things are all quiet. The lack of casualties indicates that these trigger-happy stragglers are firing blank cartridges, or that their marksmanship is bad, or their targets elusive, or that they are not really shooting at anything. Some may think the war, now past, was good while it lasted and that it has achieved substantial and useful results in spite of much ill-temper and downright nonsense. The destiny that was thought to hang on its outcome has not followed predictions either of plenary or partial salvation or destruction. Claims of victory can be discounted since nobody admits defeat. No formal armistice is in force and majority feeling on both sides seems to be that this war, like all wars, was a messy and unprofitable rumpus over issues that were never clear and aims that were never honestly announced. What was once a matter of grave importance is now regarded with unconcern, and the antagonists, though they have not abandoned their weapons, treat one another with civility and talk about their former battles with decorous restraint if not with amusement.

But no treaty of peace has been drawn up. The truce is rarely violated and then only by the incurable bully in the pulpit or the laboratory.

We shall not worry too much at these noisy purgings of latent private hostilities. It is important, however, that the bases for a just and durable peace be considered. Not because we fear a resumption of the conflict, but because it is time for raising a standard to which all men of good will and intelligence may repair. To be sure, there is good will and intelligence that will not be conciliated by any agreement. This does not mean it is therefore ill will and stupidity; rather that the human spirit cannot but maintain something of its independence—which means its right to veto, however flimsy its excuses or preposterous its claims. We shall make proper allowances for this in ourselves as well as in others. At the same time it must be conceded that treaty-drafting is no simple affair of ayes and noes among those who wish to be courteous. There are some who claim for truth a universalism incompatible with boundaries and they will remonstrate with the isolationists who start off by asking what is meant by truth. There are verbal currencies that are devalued once they cross the existing borders and some will blandly ask, during the process of exchange, what is meant by value or whence comes the semantic table of rates, and whether, if values fluctuate, who manipulates, and if they are constant, who says so. Is the speed of light the only absolute? If so, what gave speed its velocity and who has kept it invariable so long that it can be called absolute?

The primary desideratum, of course, is the will to peace and faith (what is faith?) in the superior value (what is value?) of agreement. Not the agreement of stalemate or laziness or authority, but the agreement of those who see in the cosmic plexus sufficient variety of skein and filament running out to such intangible and even opposite limits of thought and action that tentativeness in some areas is as respectable as conviction, that faith is as indefeasible as fact, and that the claim to infallibility is the only unforgivable sin (what is sin?) of those who seek truth, whether by the contemplation of the mystic or by the bombardment of the atom. This must therefore not be understood to say that timidity or equivocation is tentativeness. It is simply to recognize the intention of the vital mind that cannot rest in any system. The paradox of the delight one finds in unity and its immediate disturbance by criticism is inescapable. Dr. L. P. Jacks has said that our systems are like the inns in which the traveler, worn with journeying



amid confusion and multiplicity, spends the night, but which he leaves, once his fatigue is repaired, in order that he may take to the road again for new adventure. System, dogma, unity—these give the mind a sense of deep satisfaction; but when they become cells in a prison to incarcerate man's spirit, he will break out even at the risk of getting lost or being hounded as a fugitive.

It is to this general intention that this book is committed. Not to write a treaty of peace, but to extend somewhat the area within which good will and intelligence can meet. More precisely perhaps, to indicate some of the ways in which existing areas may be found that are congenial for all those who pursue the truth under the twin auspices of science and religion. One of the obvious causes of the war was the drawing of boundaries and the assertion, by both belligerents, that the other side was perverse. Boundaries estrange and recriminations offend and the battle was joined, not so much by clash as by long-range bombardment. All the while there was an area between the two sides that could have accommodated most of them had they agreed to move forward to it. Is it not possible, now that the shooting has stopped, to come nearer together? It is quite proper and altogether necessary as a discipline of learning, to limit the field of one's inquiry. It is also necessary and proper to see all experience as a whole, or to make the effort to do so. Knowledge must be both exact and extensive and the narrow diameter of one circle need not be taken as the measure of the orb of Everything. To the scientist the fact is his faith; to the religionist the faith is his fact. When they have agreed on that they can be brought together on many things; brought together, that is, not necessarily in agreement but in inquiry. \*

[ 2 ]

What do we mean by the Faith of Nature? Put in substantive form we mean Naturalism, the confidence—we forbear, at this point, to say faith—that is derived from nature as a closed system of order, process, and end. The purpose of the naturalist is to understand whatever he studies in terms of automatism. It makes no difference whether one studies stars or snowflakes, their existence, explanation, operation, and direction are self-contained. Whatever we can observe or whatever is reported to us by our senses is, in all respects, an *ordinary* operation;

the intrusion of *extra-ordinary* operations, if possible and permitted, would serve neither to explain nor clarify.

Such phenomena in man's behavior as are described as ethical, rational, aesthetic, etc., are simply the *natural* activities of the *genus homo*, similar in meaning to the flight of a bird or the burrowing of a mole. What this genus calls values are what the bird would attach to flight as locomotion in comparison with the progress of the mole's slow excavations. Man neither has nor needs sanctions or powers that are not wholly contained within the closed system apprehendable by man's physical sensorium. Nor is his accommodation to nature, or his adjustment to it to suit his physical convenience, a response to a supernatural urge or a sense of destiny. The physical universe is bound, at one extremity, so far as he can know, by origin and, he deduces, by extinction at the other. He too is hedged by the termini of birth and death. The focus of his existence is concentric with the wider circumference of the universe. His diameter is as infinitely small as that of the physical universe is infinitely vast, yet he is one with nature, not one plus.

When this approach to his experience, inner and outer, is the concern of the philosopher, the claim is likely to be made that this natural world is all there is to reality, or that there is only one essence or level of reality and that it exists wholly within spacetime. This closed system of fact and theory admits no intrusion. If, for argument's sake, other concretions or patterns of reality are conceded, they cannot, because of their disparate nature, intrude or trespass by event or energy, upon the natural order of which man is a part. Unless purpose and freedom and ultimate ends can be explained in natural categories they must therefore be regarded as illusion.

The metaphysics of naturalism is therefore monistic. What men call good and bad, true and false, etc., are sweet and bitter water from an identical spring. Ideas are reflexes, secretions, or artifacts, and are useful only in terms of the measure to which they contribute to robustness of mind or body or to the security of the social organism within which each individual is a cell. The highest form of being is sensory experience. Therefore the highest form of knowledge is simple description of sensory phenomena, which can ultimately be resolved into mathematical formulas. To this is given the name of Positivism. The



worth of what we know has no relation to its truth or falsity, but to the simple unmediated experience of knowing or the states of consciousness which are, in themselves, purely physiological. Or, from another report we learn that everything exists because of states of the mind. To this is given the name Existentialism. The hard core of this philosophical rigorism is difficult to keep polished to a convincing luster because, as we shall see, certain natural experiences cloud or even corrode its sheer surface, giving it the appearance of something else. Here the likelihood of illusion intrudes and raises the further question as to the reality of illusion.

## [ 3 ]

The theology of naturalism is in its origin as ancient as the worship of natural objects but it has found its formulation in varieties as extreme as animism and secularistic humanism. In all of these efforts to construct an orderly system of theological thought on naturalistic presuppositions there is the basic assumption that there can be a high degree of probability achieved in a theory of God reached by the exercise of pure reason. Such an approach, it is said, can be made so plausible that the generality of mankind can be convinced. It must be insisted that this activity of the human reason is still within the inviolable order of nature and that no extracosmic interlopers, whether deities, spiritual energies, demigods, or nondescript incarnations, always ready to meddle with the determined order of the universe—including the ideas and affections of men—can be allowed to trespass. This is no claim to the infallibility of human reason or for its ultimacy as a cosmic phenomenon. There may be, for all that is known, an essence higher than reason. It is simply a claim for reason's availability as a competent guide for such distances as the exploring spirit of man is willing to be led.

## [ 4 ]

There are natural reasons why naturalism holds great fascination for those who inquire about the nature of things. Nature is inescapable, it never lets us alone. Whether it invites us to examine its products or explore its secrets, or whether "it pours over us its exquisite disdain,"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The phrase is Emerson's and was used to describe the effect of music on those who are listless in their attention to a great symphony.



it will not be ignored. To reduce it to a dance of atoms or to watch it as it expands into infinite diameters beyond space cannot release us from the sense of being thrall to its beauty, its terror, and its power. It sings and it snarls; it shouts and it whispers; it withholds and it surfeits; it cajoles and it ignores. We may call this anthropomorphism if we like but nature will not take offense. It is coquette and lover, slave and despot, god and devil. It composes us of atoms and brings us to birth, and finally it diffuses our mortal dust into the fecund earth. We stand in awe before its majesty and are bored by its unending commonplace. It is profligate and frugal, mother and shrew, monitor and wanton.

If we are preoccupied with ourselves we escape nothing of nature, for within the shrunken diameters of our private worlds we see the same sort of order and variety and react to it with the same volatile moods. In a sense as real as poetic we are the children of nature and we deeply feel that by knowing our cosmic mother, we will gain entrance into the arcanum where the ultimate mystery of her existence and our own is hid. So, since nature will not let us alone we will keep relentlessly knocking at its doors, or turning its pages, or dissecting its forms. Our effort may be as artless as a bird-walk or as precise as a formula, but it is simply man looking at his world and asking questions, believing answers are to be had. When he finally falls asleep from weariness, it is on the broad bosom of earth-mother that he will rest forever.

Natural science then is the discipline by which the asking of right questions and the quest for right answers has been organized. As a discipline it is young; as a quest it is old as man. It seems to be a unique quality of our genus that enables us to get out of tight places by discovering, through uniquely rational processes, means for our salvation. Sometimes in order to save himself man has danced and prayed before an effigy; sometimes he has crudely developed what we now call technical know-how. Eventually he has come to believe that anything can be done if he knows how to do it. No matter if in pursuing personal and social goals he falls victim to something inside himself that frustrates his effort. This has not canceled the hope that springs eternal in every human breast, hope that is just as truly a phenomenon of the human psyche as endocrine or autonomic nervous responses to external excitation.



In order to do its work well, scientific inquiry has had to limit its field and make clear to itself its intention. It has been put thus by a contemporary scientist of distinction: "The purpose of science is to develop, without prejudice or preconception of any kind, a knowledge of the facts, the laws, the processes of nature."<sup>2</sup> That scientists have no sure protection against prejudices and preconceptions, even when in the laboratory, the scientists themselves readily agree. There is, indeed, a greater willingness to concede the likelihood of these disturbing factors entering into scientific generalizations than has been the case hitherto. Witness Dr. Osborn again: "The even more important task of religion . . . is to develop the conscience, the ideals, and the aspirations of mankind. Each of these two activities represents a deep and vital function of the soul of man, and both are necessary for the life, the progress, and the happiness of the human race." This, we are told, is taken from a credo signed by fifteen eminent scientists, though we are warned, with proper scientific caution, that "many eminent physicists, astronomers, biologists, and psychologists of America would naturally (sic) decline to subscribe to such a credo of faith." Did he think that religion can do its chore without "prejudice or preconception of any kind"? He doesn't say. Does he think conscience, ideals, aspirations invade the laboratory? No comment!

But does science actually work within a closed system? Professor Bridgman<sup>3</sup> says that the discovery of hitherto "unsuspected physical structures in the direction of the very small and in the direction of the very large" compel science to the conclusion that the universe is not "closed." Says he: "The most sweeping generalizations that we have, energy and entropy, find their meaning only in terms of closed systems. How shall we think about a truly open system? What meaning can we give to our most fundamental concepts, such as existence itself, in realms in which the necessary processes of thought fail?" One would be interested to know what other processes of thought are available when "necessary" processes fail. Are they "unnecessary" in terms of being subject to an act, so to speak, of the will and therefore voluntary? This comes very close to what faith, conceived in its loftiest

<sup>2</sup> Henry Fairfield Osborn, *The Earth Speaks*.

<sup>3</sup> In a paper presented at the mid-century Convocation of the M.I.T., Prof. W. Bridgman of Harvard University discussed the subject "Science, Materialism and the Human Spirit."

terms, may be. Does an open system demand what a closed system could get on without?

There will be more of this later; for the moment it is used to point up the idea already advanced: that there is an opportunity never before open for the drawing together of the hitherto estranged disciplines of scientific (naturalistic) and theological thought. Dr. Bridgman warns against shirking the disciplines of scientific thinking by "the invention of essences and cosmic purposes and absolutes." We agree to the need for caution but suppose there are cosmic purposes and absolutes that are not invented? What of the absolute speed of light already referred to? Certainly man did not invent that. If it exists it must be accounted for and if man did not invent it, how did it come about? Again we find ourselves witnessing an interesting change of attitude that may be highly significant. The scientist accepts the Fact as his supreme arbiter. What happens when facts (e.g. energy and entropy) do not arbitrate? Does no one have anything to say?

[ 5 ]

Such matters have nothing to do with the infatuation of our times with science. It is, as has been often pointed out, the things that scientific ingenuity has produced for the convenience of living that have won the world's heart.  $E=MC^2$  was exciting news to a mere handful of persons, but when the popularizers of the story of the release of energy by nuclear fission came up with the idea that there was power enough in a theater ticket to send an ocean liner around the world, thousands of people who never thought of putting to sea agreed warmly that Professor Einstein had really got hold of something big.

Big indeed, and now in a dimension so vast as to be terrifying. Time was when men thought that the more power they could develop, the greater the promise of security to individual and society since power could produce or procure the devices of security. Now, having solved the ultimate secret of physical energy and fashioned it into a weapon, we are less confident of survival than were our savage ancestors who discovered fire and began timidly putting it to use. The logic of our ingenuity seems only to lead to annihilation, if power is the sole guarantee of security. We must discover either a new direction or a new type of power. Is there such a thing? Are those who talk of the priority



of moral or spiritual power introducing confusion into the conversations about nuclear power? To say we must have faith in moral power to provide safety is surely no more mystifying than to say we must have faith in atomic power to provide security, and at this point it seems more plausible. The advocates of each exhibit faith however spasmodic or stolid it may be in either case. And when science and religion unite in the exercise of faith, they stand side by side.

## [ 6 ]

What is faith? Gerald Heard defines it as the resolve to give the highest possible meaning to all that we know. Here the will (resolve) combines with rational processes (give meaning) to bring everything into focus. How *high* the meaning, or how *precise* the meanings given, will be determined by certain contingent factors. Similarly how extensive *all that we know* will turn out to be cannot be predicted. A high meaning is, after all, fixed by the point at which measurement begins. For some it may be absurdly low, for others extravagantly high. At the same time the will to give meaning can be absolute so long as it lasts. It is subject to no external measurement. No matter to whatever aberrations it may lead, it must still be conceded that the autonomy of the act of willing is unconditioned for its duration. If there is no such inclination of the will at all, the meanings that are given to experience will be random or accidental. Thus the use of our newly found physical energies will have no moral relevance at all, and in place of the spiritual implications of power will be put its implications for security. The end of that seems to promise neither security nor—ultimately—power.

The phrase "Faith of Science" has too long been thought a contradiction in terms. Science is knowledge (*scientia*); faith is a posture of the spirit as it attends to intimations outside the area of pragmatic and provable fact. Thus the contradiction has been put. So, it has followed, religion is the product of faith; science, of fact, developed "without prejudice or preconception of any kind." This is, we believe, an unsupported dichotomy. Science gives the highest meanings it can to all it knows. This is its faith and it finds its expression in the creed of order, energy, process. Furthermore, science has faith in the necessity for limiting the scope of its knowledge to phenomena that can be measured by its specialized apparatus. Thus its faith is, by an act of the will, a



limited faith, but for that reason no less valid or vital than the faith of the philosopher who is resolved to encompass everything in his quest for meaning. The question as to which faith is better is meaningless unless we are sure what we mean by better. Each is faith in so far as it represents a resolve to give meaning to what we know.

It is, however, no easy matter for science to keep within the limits it sets to its quest for meaning. Try as it may it can hardly avoid trespass on the areas outside direct observation, determined fact, and studied process. This is not because it is careless or slipshod or insincere. It is because of something inherent in the human psyche. Though it seek to avoid the categories of purpose and value as elements in any meaning assigned to or derived from experience, these cannot be by-passed. No mesh tight enough to filter them out has yet been devised. Like powerful radiation frequencies they penetrate the stoutest barricades erected to keep them out. For the relation of one phenomenon to another is not comprehended without meanings, and meanings are intrinsically values. When one neutron splits an atom and destroys for the moment its nuclear organization, releasing an electron for wild unpredictable flight, the result however formulated is meaning, and meaning is its result. What result? Rebound, light, heat, energy, flight? What do these mean? And meaning must contain also what happens. Again, is what happens orderly or aberrant? If one or the other, does it make any difference? If difference, then value.

Value, we have been endlessly told, is no concern of pure science. To some this has meant grandeur, to others irresponsibility. The scientist's interest is quantitative only. But it is doubtful if there is any quantitative judgment that can be correctly described as a nonvalue judgment. Even a nonvalue judgment is a judgment of nonvalue, whether direct or implied. In the realm of pure mathematics  $2+2=4$ . Here four is clearly more than two. Is not the concept of "more" with its correlative "less" the base on which all value judgment rests? One may ask whether the nature of value is a quality or a relation, whether it is objective or subjective, intrinsic or instrumental. Value may be equated with existence or with oughtness and in this latter aspect include ethics. All of these categories, however, are reducible to that of more or less. The only absolute disvalue is absolute zero; anything *more* than zero has value, whether it is described as more worth, more



accuracy, more validity, more righteousness, more power, or more beauty. For the moment the concept of ultimate value can be reserved for later comment. At this point we observe that if there is no judgment of fact that is without an essential value quotient, then the distinction between science as the domain of fact and religion as the domain of value, which has been set between the two disciplines to keep them separate, can no longer be regarded as relevant.

If this is true of the discipline of natural science it is more obviously true in the nonscientific disciplines—*aesthetics*, *ethics*, *logic*, where the categories of value express themselves as more or less beautiful, more or less right, more or less cogent. It is an important step in the direction of the needed reconciliation to agree that all thinking is engaged in the business of passing value judgments on every sort of phenomenon encountered. It cannot be true then that the man with his eye to a microscope does not care that he sees a *Paramecium*, or that what he sees has no value beyond the fact of being an organism. Nor can the logician be indifferent to the value of a syllogism or the philosopher to the value of a hypothesis.

## [ 7 ]

Hypothesis—that's a stout word. There need be no essential difference between scientific and speculative thought so far as their value quality is concerned. Similarly, in so far as possible—and there are limits—the discursive and descriptive disciplines should not differ in method. Obviously the phenomena of love are not measurable quantitatively nor on the other hand are they to be accurately determined qualitatively. Love is an experience, always understood in terms of more or less, though never accurately measured by linear or weight or time standards. The heart of the scientist is like that of his philosopher neighbor, and the behavior of both their minds—if well disciplined—is the same. The business of both of them is invention.

Invention? Yes, the invention of concepts. Dr. Einstein has reminded us that physics got its start by inventing the ideas of mass, force, and an inertial system. These led to the development of a point of view that was purely mechanistic. Everything we knew then, was understandable as particles impinged upon by forces. Given particle and force it was necessary only to know their distances from each other

to explain their behavior. When the magnetic needle disturbed this system, the physicist invented the concept of the electromagnetic field. Here the field became more important than the particle. Later the relativity theory invented a new concept—the four-dimensional time-space continuum. Then came the quantum theory with its invention of discontinuities and laws of probability. During all this development there was the significant invention of concepts to meet new situations, but the aim of physics never changed, namely, the effort to find a way through the confusion of phenomena to harmony. Without faith in that inner harmony there would have been no invention, no concepts, and no science.

This is another way of saying that men were making hypotheses, and within their often fragile and unprecise forms, progress of thought has been able to develop. And what is faith but hypothesis, tinged with austerity in the scientist's hands, but tinted with imagination in the philosopher's? For reasons of precision certain disciplines demand limited hypotheses, for reasons of inclusion, others demand hypothesis on the grand scale.

We observe then that both the scientist and the philosopher (or theologian) render value-judgments and that both employ the hypothesis as a blaze to mark their way through the forests of unclassified facts. Why then have they not found it congenial to explore together? There was a time, to be sure, when the quest for truth was a partnership; it was only in the past century that it became a conflict.

Perhaps Francis Bacon hit upon the answer. In *Novum Organum* he comments on the idols or false notions which, in his age, had commanded the fealty of the minds of men and jealously guarded them against usurpation or assault. He names four classes of idols: Idols of the Tribe; Idols of the Cave; Idols of the Market Place; and Idols of the Theater. The first has to do with man's ideas of himself as a genus-member of a tribe; the second has to do with his ideas of himself as an isolated individual—assuming that every man has a private cave or den of his own; the third results from his meeting with other creatures like himself in the market; and the fourth has to do with the dogmas to which he gives dramatic form—philosophies, worlds created by his imagination and infused with vitality.

The figures may not seem particularly apt to us and yet Bacon put



his finger on a very common habit of the mind: the creation of idols for worship. Why this is so is interesting but, for the moment, beside the point. Man makes an idol of mankind, of his individual self, of his relations with his fellows, and of his fancies about ultimate things. The first of these idols interests the anthropologist, the second the psychologist, the third the sociologist, and the fourth the philosopher. No matter what these specialists think about the foolishness or the importance of these idols, men do worship them and if deprived of them, make new ones. A recent book has poked fun at the idol of the modern scientist which the author calls somewhat ingloriously, a Sacred Cow.<sup>4</sup>

All of this is not unrelated to the matter of value-judgment and hypothesis just discussed. That is worshiped which is valuable and hypothetical. For this reason when new values displace old ones, new idols—and new hypotheses—are set up in their place. In a very real sense the laboratory is as truly a shrine as a cathedral, even if the idols—and saints—bear different names.

## [ 8 ]

Is religion really subject to idols and hypotheses? Faith, we have said, is the resolve to give the highest meaning to all we know. This describes the faith of science, limited to such phenomena as it desires to bring within its orderly system. Let Professor Conklin of Princeton put it in his own way:

The faith, ideals, and ethics of science constitute a form of natural religion. Scientists generally would agree, I think, that the faith and ideals of science include the following: (1) Belief in the universality of that system of law and order known as nature. (2) Confidence that nature is intelligible and that by searching our knowledge of it may be increased. (3) Recognition of the fact that knowledge is relative, not absolute, and that only gradually do we arrive at truth concerning nature. (4) Realization that there is no way to avoid temporary error, since in unexplored fields we learn largely by trial and error. (5) The necessity of freedom, open-mindedness, and sincerity in seeking truth. (6) Confidence that truth is mighty and will prevail and that even unwelcome truth is better than cherished error. (7) Realization that truth can not be established by compulsion, nor error permanently overcome by force. (8) Belief that the

<sup>4</sup> Anthony Standen, *Science As a Sacred Cow* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1948).



long course of evolution which has led man and society, intelligence and ethics, is not finished, and that man can now take an intelligent part in his future progress. In these articles the faith of science does not differ essentially from that of enlightened religions.<sup>5</sup>

It is interesting to note that he sees clearly that "the faith and ideals of science *include*" certain assumptions. Other assumptions are excluded in the interest of the prosecution of the scientific task. It is possible, therefore, to assume that religion may seek to be more inclusive in the prosecution of its task. Knowledge is relative, not absolute, he says, but wisely avoids saying that all the *objects* of man's knowledge are relative, thus excluding the absolutes with which philosophy and religion undertake to come to terms. In his point eight he implies that there has been purpose—"the long course of evolution which has led man and society"—and predicts that man can, by sharing this purpose, participate intelligently in it. In other words—those of Professor Einstein—Professor Conklin invents these eight concepts. Not out of nothing but out of observed experience, and in them he includes confidence (faith) in the invincibility of truth, an ethical loyalty to truth's weapons of persuasion and a realization of a purpose informing the processes of nature. This comes as near making truth an absolute as anything can be, though the whole case for absolutism is by no means stated. If either of the other concepts with which truth is customarily allied—beauty and goodness—was put where he puts truth, we would have an absolutistic aesthetics or an absolute ethics. And if we put the word God in the place of truth we have the hypothesis of an absolute religion. When, therefore, Havelock Ellis says,<sup>6</sup> in another but similar connection, "the fruits of this scientific spirit are sincerity, patience, humility, the love of nature, and the love of man," the religious mind feels it necessary to invent (out of observable experience) only one more concept—God—to provide the inclusiveness which the hypothesis of religion demands. That, we believe, makes a very great difference.

Religion can make no claim to exemption from the idol-making proclivities of the mind, nor from the necessity for hypotheses (inventions) to inch it along in its quest for the ultimates of experience

<sup>5</sup> Edwin Grant Conklin, "Science and Ethics," *Science*, December, 1937.

<sup>6</sup> *The New Spirit* (Washington, D. C.: National Home Library, 1935).

and meaning. Its claim, whether supported or not, is simply that it seeks, as the meaning of all that we know, a hypothesis that is not limited. This has often made the advocates of religion misbehave perhaps, by the arrogance of their claims and, more often has made them seek escape from an argument they are too lazy or dull to continue, by appealing to the absolute conscience, which is obviously not absolute at all, but is mistakenly assumed to be by equating it with the voice of God. This folly must be shamefacedly confessed. On the contrary, it does not abridge the right or the necessity for religion to set wider orbits than science for its quest.

If the faith of science is that resolve to give the highest possible meaning (here in the sense of the most precise) to certain prescribed areas of experience, it is the faith of religion to resolve to give the highest possible meaning (here in the sense of the most inclusive) to all that we know. If this definition be sharpened to cover the Christian religion it may be put thus: The faith of Christianity is the resolve to give meaning to all we know in terms of God. This meaning will be mediated through three factors: the experience of the individual as he confronts God, the experience and testimony of Jesus Christ, and the experience and witness discoverable in community.

[ 9 ]

We have undertaken to show that the irreconcilability so long felt to exist between science and religion does not rest in the nature of truth, or in the processes of learning, or in the normal postures of the human spirit. This being so, the Faith of Nature can make a companion-of-the-way with the Nature of Faith. This has been possible so often, when inhibitions to comradeship have not been set up to protect the pretensions of doctrinaires or dogmatists, that it would seem to be, in all candor, the natural way to behave. The one hundredth anniversary of the death of William Wordsworth has recalled to many the religious faith that infused his poetry. His hypothesis, had he stopped to formulate one, would not have been expressed in terms of the orthodox religion of his times or, indeed, of its orthodox science. The meaning he gave to the world he knew he called Wisdom or the Spirit of the Universe, and of this he said: "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her." This is the confession of a poet, to be sure, but one who



tried, unsuccessfully, to keep his attitudes within the framework of naturalism. It is dangerous to assume the pose of love before nature if one is to know her scientifically. Love of nature can be as deceptive and as blind as love of nature's fairest creature—a young maid or man. Science cannot afford to risk love of the facts and processes of nature; its relation to them must be platonic, if anything. Nature's processes may interest but must never be allowed to seduce. The student of nature *qua* nature must forever remain celibate.

To this austerity Wordsworth made no pretense. He loved nature, confident that his heart would never suffer the anguish of betrayal. The windy heights above the lakes, the placid valley of the Yarrow—these held for him enchantment that denied his sedate descriptions of Wisdom and the anonymous Spirit of the Universe. A primrose by a river's brim was a specimen to the botanist and nothing more. To him it was something to love with utter confidence, indeed with passion.

✓ Something of the poet is in every man however he may disguise it. It is this that makes him see something beyond the smear on the slide beneath the microscope's enlarging eye, or beyond the erratic flight of an electron. He will have to describe smear and electron in prosaic terms, but will that necessity limit his interest or constrict his vision? No; there is connection between organism and order, between electron and eternity. These relations may be deviously sought out and cautiously explained. Caution and restraint have been the safety of the scientist even as the boldness (faith) of the seeker after God has been his salvation. Nature never did betray the heart that loved her, or the hand that dissected her. Neither did God.

It is the purpose of these studies to confront the vital experiences of Everyman and seek to understand the way in which the religious hypothesis of God supplies a fuller meaning than the more restricted hypotheses of structure, form, and process which are the inventions of the scientist. We recall the quotation from Henry Fairfield Osborn earlier referred to: "Each of these two activities [science and religion] represents a deep and vital function of the soul of man, and both are necessary for the life, the progress, and the happiness of the human race." We have seen that these functions need not be carried on independently. Why not agree to struggle together? "The life, the



progress, and the happiness of the human race"—these were never more precarious, nor, we might add, more nearly possible, but they cannot be saved or enhanced, as the case may be, without the united effort of all those to whom truth is more than a prejudice or a fancy.

There is a final word that needs saying. However plausible the assertion of some scientists that their task involves nothing of moral obligation, this can never be claimed by those for whom God is the grand hypothesis. By relations that will subsequently be pointed out, the apprehension of truth is indivisible from the exercise of the moral will. The more we know of God, the more we are pressed into His purposes. This may be as private as what we call the voice of conscience or as universal as the destiny of creation. Does it need to be said that in the moral aspects of the meaning we give to all that we know, and in the discharge of the obligations they lay upon us, lies the last good hope of earth?

It is to a discussion of this that we now turn. We think it will be established that in all the areas of our interest, God makes the difference in what we think and do.

## *Chapter II*

### Faith and God

**T**HE fact of God is an experience; the idea of God is an invention. Recall what Professor Whitehead once said about the most important invention of man being the invention of invention, and Professor Einstein's observation that physics had its origin with the invention of mass, force, and an inertial system, and that these conceptual inventions led to the formulation of the mechanistic point of view.

As the experience of the physical universe has been progressively mediated through more and more sensitive receptors, and as the invention of ideas to explain experience has changed from mass, form, and inertia to magnetic fields, relativity, time-space continuum, the quantum theory, etc., so alas, as the experience of God has been mediated through more and more sensitive receptors, the ideas invented to explain this experience have changed. The invention of ideas in order to explain phenomena is exactly what has already been described as the resolve to give the highest possible meaning to all that we know. Invention, that is to say, is the exercise of faith, faith that is at the same time a posture of the spirit and a tendency to action.

#### [ 1 ]

The invention of meaning is one of the functions of knowledge, other functions being describable in terms of at least two other sorts of sensations, aesthetic and moral. Knowledge is a function of being and what we know is therefore conditioned by what we are, if indeed it is not determined by our essential nature. So far as we are able to discover,



a bird knows when and how to build a nest because it is a bird, just as a gopher knows how to dig a hole because it is a gopher. In the case of man, however, there is what appears to be an essential endowment that makes possible for him to know what he does in a manner that is higher than the knowing involved in nidifying or burrowing. How much reason goes into the instinctual knowledge of animals after their habit patterns of behavior have been established, it is not necessary to inquire. There is no doubting the fact, however, that man's instinctual and emotional responses to experience are rationalized by the faculty of understanding. This glow of radiance, feeble at best in most of us, but in the geniuses of the race sometimes dazzling, is an intimation both of what the essential nature of man is and what it may become. However faltering its light, it is what is real in us; it is part of our sharing of the world's meaning.

When this faculty is attentive to the phenomena of mass, force, and inertia and moves by its amazing deductions ultimately to the now famous  $E=MC^2$  formula, it is discovering meaning in terms of what man is within himself, as well as of what is external to him. When this faculty is attentive to the miracle-essence he feels himself and his world to be, he begins discovering meanings in terms of philosophy, and he will be discontent with all his inventions and images if they fail to provide him with the orderliness of logic and the clarity of systematized thought. This knowing faculty is not exhausted, however, by the quest of the scientist and the philosopher, for man knows as well by feeling as he does by measurement and by logic. There is more mystery here but not more dubiety. Make all the allowances necessary for the errors in the rational analysis of our feelings, and for the ever present self-deceptions of the proud or self-pitying ego, it still is true that the deep emotional experiences of every man are channels through which the waters of knowledge flow. We know by loving, we know by hating; and this is a sort of knowledge different from our rational reflections on the experiences of love or hate. If love, fear, and rage are our instructors and if we truly learn through them essential facts about life, it is because of what we essentially are. What we know, we repeat, is determined by what we are.

If then God is an experience, as falling rain is an experience, He must be so because of what we are. How we became what we are is a



secret hidden still in the mystery of creation, but what we are we are in a fair way of finding out. Falling rain is an experience that has different reference to everything on which it falls, whether it be a rock, and thus a factor in erosion, a flower and thus a factor in nutrition, or a man and thus a factor in convenience. Convenience is a much more spacious concept than erosion. It may mean that the rain provides an excuse for staying indoors or a reason for going out, but to anything less than a person who can decide on what he wants to do because of the rain, the relation of the shower is sharply circumscribed to the object's specific nature.

Let us quote Professor Einstein again:

The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed. This insight into the mystery of life, coupled though it be with fear, has also given rise to religion. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling, is at the center of true religiousness.<sup>1</sup>

"This knowledge, this feeling"—the words appear to be used synonymously. If so, there are some who will say that he is speaking out of character as a scientist. Certainly  $E=MC^2$  is known in a way that it is not felt. And yet he, as the inventor of that profound idea, speaks also of "the mysterious," "the most beautiful thing we can experience." There is, he says, a datum that can be felt as an aesthetic experience, that can be known as the source of art and science, that can be deeply seen (insight) as the origin of religion. This "impenetrable" thing is the "highest wisdom" and the "most radiant beauty" or, as he sums it up, it is knowledge and feeling.

Certainly one of the great facts of human history is the endlessly recurrent quest for something good in life, whatever meaning is given to the word "good." Even the quest for evil, where it has been followed, has been under the aegis of the good, evil being identified with goodness. Whether such nihilism, moral or aesthetic, be regarded

<sup>1</sup> *Living Philosophies* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1931).

as aberrant to or original in the nature of man, the fact remains that man's rationalizations of it have been calculated to flatter him, that is, to give him the benefit of any doubt (sense of guilt) he may subtly feel. And when it has been necessary to invent a concept to capture this experience of the good, the components of the human psyche have been raised to the superlative degree and concreted in what is generally called the reality of God. This is, to be sure, anthropomorphic, but since we have no experience that is not anthropocentric, we can think in no categories outside the human plexus. Certainly this is more satisfying than mechanomorphism which would seem to be the only alternative. We shall perhaps never learn to speak except in symbols unless we acquire a vocabulary consisting of nothing but mathematical formulas and equations. When we read: "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all his innermost parts" (Proverbs 20:27), we do not repudiate what is a profound insight, simply because it is couched in metaphor.

## [ 2 ]

We have said that faith is the resolve to give the highest possible meaning to all that we know and that a theistic faith makes God that meaning. Christian faith finds the meaning of God mediated through Jesus Christ and the Christian community. Yet it may be properly asked whether, thinking about the act of faith in respect to God is not logical tail-chasing? We must, we say, make God the meaning of everything we know. But what is God? He is to be known, whatever He is, by the same act of faith that makes Him the meaning of things. Thus He is both the object and instrument of faith. We assume Him (by faith) to be, in order that we may make Him the meaning of all that is. Thus at the outset we appear to beg the question. Our logic spins us in a dizzy circle, it does not lead us directly to a conclusion.

Logical Positivists would insist that we must produce empirical proof of the fact of God before we can use Him as the measure of all meaning. To which we may reply that both the term "empiricism" and the results of the empirical approach to phenomena (as opposed to a normative approach) have been elaborately confused. This is no place to argue as to whether empiricism is concerned with the sources of knowledge, or with denials about the possibilities of deriving certain



types of knowledge, or with the limitations of such knowledge as we think we possess. It may deal with method or hypothesis, with a type of temperament (tough-minded) or with an attitude of dependence on sense rather than on intellect. It may be more concerned with relations, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, between things, than with matters of direct particular experience. Hobbes, who was certainly an empiricist, believed that the three most important aspects of nature—man, matter, and the state—were all corporeal and all their events had one cause, motion. Einstein, who is hardly less of an empiricist, speaks of knowing “that what is impenetrable [unempirical] to us really exists.”

Strictly speaking, to be sure, God is not susceptible of empirical proof within the limitations that natural science sets upon this method. Analysis of God, controlled experiment of God, verification by repetition, deduction—these are not possible. Such are the methods of dealing with parts of reality, methods that achieve definitive results because the limits of inquiry are narrowed and scrupulously observed. Unless God is only a *part* of the Real, which in our present state of knowledge is a logical absurdity, He must be the *whole* of the Real. Obviously the whole cannot be studied empirically because it is greater than the sum of its parts, which alone can be so studied. Indeed is not the dictum that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts an act of faith, a resolve to give to the sum a meaning higher than that given its parts? Certainly as such a proposition refers to the universe it is outside the possibilities of verifiable proof.

There are arguments for the existence of God that produce different degrees of plausibility, contingent, as they must be, on many variable factors. There are facts of experience—sense of dependence, need for protection, salvation, etc.; facts of religious history; instinctive demands for ultimate good, for justice; the conscience, the sense of oughtness; postulates of reason, and the logical unsupportability of the opposite and the impossibility of proving a negative. At best, however, this type of reasoning can only arrive at a high degree of probability, which is, we need to be reminded, as far as philosophy can ever go. Metaphysically the idea of God, whether derived from authority, revelation, logic, or philosophy, is meaningless unless it involves highest, ultimate being. Clearly man's knowledge of the ultimate can never be more



than fragmentary and discontinuous, though such knowledge as he has can be veridical and constant. Furthermore there always lurks the peril indicated in the famous *mot* of Pascal: *Le dieu défini est le dieu fini*: (the God limited by definition is a finished [finite] God). Whatever may be said about the moral value to be had in the experience of limitation, both for our ability to comprehend and in the exercise of our freedom, there is another value that is seen in the actual defense this limitation provides us. Man's tendency, both intellectual and spiritual (by which we mean the operation of his reason and his pride), is to seek for absolutes. Because this quest is ultimately to be disappointed, he will have to stop short of it, but he is prone to go further and overcompensate for his failure by giving the character of the absolute to the relative thing he imagines he has captured. This is the danger that besets all claims to infallibility and final certitude, which, when they build for themselves institutions to contain them, can become the concretions of absolutisms that sooner or later must destroy all partial knowledge to protect their own claims to omniscience.

Beyond this it is possible to say that both idea and ideal are, in a very real way, empirical. Not empirical in the way that falling rain is, but as facts of experience.  $2 + 2 = 4$  as an idea is as empirical a fact as two stones plus two stones make four stones. Democracy as a sense of comradeship between two persons is no less real than the ideal of democracy as a type of world experience. God as idea or ideal is as real an experience to those whose receptor and rational apparatus is sensitive enough, as is the sleeping Buddha in the famous temple in the Western Hills beyond Peking. We ask therefore that the full meaning of "empirical" be allowed to encompass both the findings of the laboratory and the dreams of the mystic. This will be no simple matter, but there is no logical reason for shrinking its applicability to the narrowed uses that science has found necessary for its research techniques.

[ 3 ]

Assuming that idea (invention) and ideal may properly be regarded as empirical since they are verifiable as facts of experience, can the idea of God supply us with the highest meaning to all that we know? Or, to put it otherwise, is God a live option to the exercise of faith? Or, does God make any difference?

Before an attempt is made to answer this it may be helpful if we can ask questions of other hypotheses which deal with the meaning of all we know in ways that leave God out, both as experience and idea. For many individuals and for some cultures they have represented high meanings and must be dealt with as credible and commendable acts of faith.

Consider first those negative understandings of phenomena that begin with a veto. They hold that man must say *no* to the things he knows because they are really not there. That all experience is illusion may be still seriously held in some quarters, but it has never been generally acceptable to the pragmatic mind of the West. Students surveying the history of philosophy encounter Bishop Berkeley and his subjective idealism and are interested and amused by the notion for a while, but Dr. Johnson, kicking a stone with his gouty foot to prove the stone and the foot and the gout are not illusory, generally satisfies as a refutation. Outside the tradition of Western thought there are esoteric cults or even religions that make much of the hypothesis that all is illusion, that nothing is all, and that all is nothing. This disposes of both the thinker and the thought as well as the object of thought. How something that is not real can have the capacity of understanding anything, whether real or otherwise, is not possible to know. Certainly if everything is illusion, then the person who thinks so is illusory. To explain the meaning of things by denying them existence is to say that the meaning of things is that there is no meaning. If this represents an act of the will (faith is the resolve, etc.) in pursuit of meaning it is allowing the will putative reality it denies to everything else.

It is exactly at this point that Schopenhauer, whose many-sided philosophical genius included a strong predilection to the illusionist point of view, seems to have given cause for his reputation as a pessimist. If, as he maintained, the world is will and idea, even though the will is able to objectify itself in the forces of nature, in the will to live, and in the results of this urgency, the world is, nonetheless, essentially illusion, deception, simulation, and existence itself has no real value. In other words, the meaning of all that we know is that it has no meaning because it has no existence. The reasons for the pessimism engendered by such a faith are easily discernible as were also its practical results in his own tortured life. His father was a successful banker and a suicide; his neurotic mother was estranged from him for most



of his life; he thought himself pursued by the fury of fellow philosophers of whom he was morbidly jealous; he slept with loaded pistols within reach as defense against "illusory" enemies; and as a solitary, wretched and self-pitying soul he found, at times, strange compensation in pornographic writings too obscene to be published. Perhaps the way of illusion was the only escape from himself he could discover. He had found the *maya* of the pessimistic religions of the East much to his liking as a young man, and when he was old life was felt to be tolerable only by being regarded as pointless. We have no right to dismiss the illusionist hypothesis because one or many of its advocates may seem only to have been seeking explanations of experience that could enable them to escape from life. It falls by the weight of its logic: if all that we know is illusion then we as knowers are the hallucinations of minds that do not exist.

## [ 4 ]

2 The second general meaning that has been given to all that we know has gone under the name Materialism, a word that has become an omnibus for many sorts of travelers. This is no veto, it is an affirmation; and however limited it may wish to make its coverage, it lacks nothing of enthusiasm for what it believes. In the resolve to give the highest meaning to experience it has reached the conclusion that matter, which is the primordial constituent of the universe, is the only constituent, and that its behavior is determined by material processes. Cause and effect, if they can be discerned, are purely mechanical. Qualitative differences, if they can be isolated, can be reduced to quantitative differences. There is neither intelligence nor purpose involved in what is or what happens, and there are no ends except the termini of episodes and no final causes except the mechanical impulses that exert undirected forces in undesigned directions.

Of course it follows that mental states and activities are the resultant of physical forces operating within a nervous system. There is nothing that can be properly called mind as distinguished from matter. Nothing supernatural exists. This, until comparatively recent times, has been thought to be the orthodoxy of natural science though, as we have already seen, its rigor has given room to certain nonmechanistic concepts of late.

Concurrent with and contradictory to this scientific tolerance there

has arisen the spiritual materialism of our times. This is no contradiction of terms. It means simply that the spirit of the age is occupied as perhaps never before with values that wealth, physical satisfactions, and the repletion of the senses are thought to provide. This is what Professor Sorokin of Harvard calls our "sensate culture." Added to this is a powerful social and political movement that bases its claims to world domination on an interpretation of reality (ideas are matter in motion) and of history in purely mechanistic and materialistic terms. There is no tolerance here. The official repudiation of compromise on basic philosophical presuppositions by Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist Communism is as relentless as its refusal of compromise on the political level. The scientific materialism in American research laboratories is fairly innocuous as compared with the political-scientific-social materialism in the soviet-laboratory-commune behind the Iron Curtain. Sir Isaac Newton's piety was disturbed by the philosophical use that was made of his mechanics during his lifetime and he tried, as a philosopher, to come to terms with himself as a physicist. He would find it easier today, now that mechanics is refined to the behavior of radioactive particles in magnetic fields, but there are still many who would find it impossible to go along with him, even though the general scientific mind has found it less difficult to accept modifications in a rigorous materialistic mechanism than was true half a century ago. But the implications of socio-political materialism of our day are disturbing to moods more various than the discomfited piety of Sir Isaac.

## [ 5 ]

3 The third invention that undertakes to give meaning to all that we know is more of a denial than an affirmation and is the unreligious concomitant of materialism. It goes by the general name Atheism. Two things may be said about this word: it has been a pose of certain types of sophistication. Certainly where it has been stridently announced it has seemed to be an attitude that undertakes to cover up a deficit in understanding. Again it has been accused of being a blind behind which evil men have their way. That it was a fool who said in his heart that there is no God is to be followed by the correlative observation that the sinner generally says the same thing. In one case it was witlessness, in the other wickedness, that produced the atheist.



There may be justification for strictures of this sort on atheism but it cannot be dismissed, as a serious effort—for all its negativeness—to understand the nature of things, by aspersing certain self-styled atheists as fools or rascals. Many men of learning and rectitude have found neither place nor need for the concept of God in their scheme of things. Atheism has an honorable tradition if sincerity and humility in its advocates mean anything. It is unimportant to give the eminent names of some who have called themselves atheists, and it might be unfair, for one's idea of the existence of God may depend on what kind of a God he was affirmed to be. John Wesley is not the only one who has said that the god of one man might be the devil of another. Too often the repudiation of God is a repudiation of a kind of god that deserved, perhaps, the snub he was getting. Strictly speaking the word has had two correct uses: the first denies the fact of God; the second affirms that God is nonpersonal. Both of these are linked with the materialism that makes no place for anything that is not material in the universe and with the mechanism that insists that processes and purposes and ends—in so far as these concepts are tenable—are the result not of a being having the qualities that distinguish a person from a thing, but are caused by inanimate, nonmental, elementary physical powers.

It is not our intention here to discredit the claims that are made for the atheistic understanding of all that we know. The logical difficulty of proving a negative, of saying that God does not exist, is formidable. If He is not, there is no positive evidence of the existence of nothing. He can only be assumed not to be because the positive evidence for His being is inconclusive. Because Mr. Smith was not at home when we called is not sufficient cause for saying Mr. Smith is nonexistent. We mention atheism not to dispute it but to put it in the list of serious efforts of faith—and the word is carefully used—to give the highest meaning to all that we know. That these inventions are unsatisfactory from the perspectives within which this study is set is the burden of its whole argument. At this point, nevertheless, we think it helpful to suggest what seems to happen to the mind to which these three inventions seem to offer a satisfactory meaning to all human experience.

Thus it would seem, assuming that minds engage in dispute over such matters, that the illusionist forecloses the argument once it is joined; that the materialist presses his claims for a verdict by limiting

the areas to be contested; and that the atheist, except as he is the spokesman for the materialist, evades the argument by disallowing the advance of a possible hypothesis. Perhaps it deserves saying that atheism is primarily a verbal difficulty. It relinquishes one word (God) but selects another and vests it with the essential qualities of godhood. Vitalism, order, energy, cause, intelligence—these are specimen words with which atheism seeks to accommodate its needs. Atheism cannot be equated with death, confusion, impotence, aimlessness, mindlessness—opposites of the words just listed. This would make atheism absurd even to the atheist. He, we cannot but feel, has his god but he addresses him by another title.

## [ 6 ]

We have already said that any invention or hypothesis is an act of faith in terms of the definition of faith we have set for ourselves. This must cover any invention or hypothesis concerning the fact and nature of God. All inventions of the mind stand on the same level; the question for us to ask and answer is whether the invention of the concept of God reaches higher levels than its rivals. We have also expressed a need for caution as to the use we make of such words as *higher* and *highest*. There is a sense in which they are the verbal instruments of mechanistic measurement and they cannot therefore be used otherwise than quantitatively. Low is to high and high is to higher as a midget is to a normal man and a normal man is to a giant. The relativism of such judgments is furthermore often compounded with a near-sighted subjectivism which, since it sees nothing but itself, knows of nothing higher or lower.

What do we mean by *higher* when we think of God as an explanation of all that we know? Certainly not altitude, though the conditioning of our young minds still makes it easy to think of God in spatial terms—"high and lifted up"—meaning simply 'way up in the sky. Nor do we think, at this point in the discussion, that it is relevant to claim for this concept what would conventionally be called spiritual superiority or an elevation of transcendent moral or energy advantage. Such ideas have their place in any study of the nature of God, but they are not necessary to this basic hypothesis or invention.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Is. 55:9: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."



By *higher*—or by *highest*, for this is our claim—we mean a measure of accuracy in terms of comprehensiveness. We have said illusion forecloses, materialism limits, and atheism evades, and thus all three fall short, in various degrees, of comprehensiveness. The hypothesis that God supplies us with the highest meaning that can be assigned to all that we know, is our way of saying that the idea of God invites a rationale for the totality of all fact and experience that is all-inclusive and therefore is less subject to partial, fragmentary, subjective, or discontinuous meanings.

This is what may be called an ideal idea or invention. Certainly the limits of finite intelligence barricade the way to an empirical (in the manner of pure science) demonstration of the all-inclusiveness of the hypothesis of God. And yet, it need not for this reason alone, be discounted. To call it an ideal idea is not to say it is fantasy. Ideals are not the product of one individual, however extravagant his genius. They are the inventions of the practical and poetic insights of many, checked and refined by ages of general experience. For man's need evokes his own response to it, and around the undertaking to meet his need is gathered all that is available in imagination, contemplation, and practical effort. The result is a composite to which is given the name *ideal*. John Dewey<sup>3</sup> has argued that because there is interaction between fact and fancy, action and ideal, the name God can properly be assigned to this relation existing between ideal and act. Our dissent to this otherwise interesting notion arises from the obvious fact that if God, according to our hypothesis, is all-comprehensive, He is more than a relation—or relations—between ideas and practices. Here again the formula  $E=MC^2$  supplies a suggestion outside the realm of nuclear physics. The relations between mass, the speed of light, and energy that are encompassed in that equation are frighteningly, simply, and relentlessly true. But *why* are they true? The equation makes no place for the factor that makes it true. To say  $E=MC^2$  is so, simply because it is so, is to absolutize the relations between energy, mass, and the speed of light squared, and the order of the cosmos. There must be some all-inclusive Fact that makes such facts true, within which they are included in inviolable order and by which they can be assumed to be meaningful in terms of values.

<sup>3</sup> *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).

Correlative to the idea of all-inclusiveness is the hypothesis of power. This is a dynamic universe; there is nothing within it that is not to be understood in terms of dynamism, whether the energy be potential or kinetic—which is value at the physical level—or spiritual. Energy is simply the quality of something that enables it to fulfill its essential meaning. This is true whether it be a motor fuel, the current supplied to an electronic calculator, the cerebral restlessness of a philosopher, or the prayer of a mystic.

Can there be, in an orderly universe, more than one source of power? To this the answer of science is simple. The rhythmic pull on the earth's massive waters by the moon is the same energy that draws the careening electron back to its nucleus. Only very recently has this been harmonized in a new generalized theory of gravitation, but the ideal embodied in the unified conception of all energy being one has been built up by the twin insights of imagination and observed action for many generations. This idea of God as energy is perhaps the oldest of man's inventions. To the primitive man, the god of the tree was more powerful than the man at its foot with an ax or a votive offering in his hands. Wind, water, and fire, the energies in nature with which man has never yet wholly learned to cope, have always been vested or identified with deity. To regard God as cosmic energy is simply to extend the assumption of all-inclusiveness to the aspect of power in the universe. Wherever it has been felt necessary to describe the impingement of power on man's spirit, he has not incorrectly ascribed it to the ultimate source of energy in God.

The hand that draws the sunset's fragile bars  
And leads a-down the sky's sweet meadowland  
At night a flock of stars,  
Leads also me.

This some would dismiss as fancy; others are more hospitable to the practical realism of the poetic metaphor.

The highest meaning we can give to all we know is necessarily the most inclusive and must, to its ultimate limits, be conceived in terms of power. But it is necessary for us to ask the nature of this power. Is it power that destroys *or* creates, that breaks down *and* builds up, that coheres *and/or* disperses? There can be only one source of energy,



we have said. Which then is its highest manifestation? The attempt has been made to understand energy as neutral in respect to the values—viewed from the human level—of creativity or destruction. There is not one energy that concentrates, and another that diffuses; anabolism and katabolism are not different forces. Opposite though they appear to be they are the result of one all-pervading energy. Life and death are the resultant of one power, not two. Nevertheless while we have invented the concept of a unitive power and accepted the obligations this lays on us for explaining its seemingly, contradictory behavior, we are not shut up to the inference that a single energy must be a neutral energy. God, says the language of the Bible, sends His rain on the just and the unjust, but if He never sent any rain at all, both the just and the unjust would not survive the prolonged dry spell. Sir Edwin Arnold put it thus:

It maketh and unmaketh, mending all,  
What it hath wrought is better than hath been  
Slow grows the splendid pattern that it plans  
It wistful hands between.<sup>4</sup>

The point of this is that there is an exercise of energy that can be called highest in terms of cosmic value. This was recently advanced by Professor Montagu of Rutgers in an article in the *Saturday Review of Literature* in which he develops the thesis that "so far as man is concerned, the sense of mutuality and the trait of cooperativeness represent far stronger sides of his total makeup than combativeness and competitiveness. . . . The word for the moment may be 'fission'—whether with respect to physics or human affairs—but 'fission' comes much closer to reflecting man's natural behavior patterns."<sup>5</sup>

This is the word of an anthropologist. There may be some indiscretion in pushing its implications further than he does, namely, "so far as man is concerned." At the same time what is true of man as a part of nature is presumptively true of all nature. If all the manifestations of cosmic energy maintained a perfect equilibrium between creation and demolition it is difficult to see how there could be change in terms of growth or progress. If the balance is tipped toward katabasis, or as

<sup>4</sup> "The Light of Asia."

<sup>5</sup> M. F. Ashley Montagu, "Man and the Social Appetite," *S.R.L.*, Nov. 19, 1949.

the biologists put it "destructive metabolism," life would have been under a primordial sentence of defeat from the beginning. It is only possible to assume with reference to things in general what Montagu affirms "so far as man is concerned," namely, that the balance of the universal energy is tipped, albeit ever so slightly, in favor of anabasis—constructive metabolism. Perfect energy balance, no change; imbalance toward disintegration, ultimately no life; imbalance toward the integrative and vital factors, life and development. This seems necessary to account for the progression of the cosmic scheme from its initial essence to its present incalculable vastitude. Emerson, in his essay "The Young American" written fully a century ago, said: "That Genius has infused itself into nature. It indicates itself by a small excess of good, a small balance in brute facts always favorable to the side of reason." Since from the human perspective growth is a higher value than arrested life (we avoid the use of the concept of death purposely here) we may say that the energy which is the highest man can conceive allows and encourages all that is subsumed under the ideas of growth, extension, expansion, etc. This has considerable implications for all that is to be said subsequently. At this juncture it leaves us with the third invention about God: God is all-inclusive; God is dynamic; God's dynamism is inclined to life and its correlatives in nonliving substances.

Therefore God, as the meaning of all that we know, is the principle and energy of attraction. Within this idea we must find place for the opposite though not contradictory principle of diffusion as it is seen, for example, in the twin aspects of centrifugal and centripetal motion. At this point God represents to us the higher energy that attracts the discrete toward the united whole. In the physical realm it is the power of cohesion—the colloids in chemistry, gravitation in physics. In society it is the impulsion that unites family, clan, nation, culture, world. This is higher—recall what has been said of value being a matter of more or less in terms of absolute zero—than its explosive, centrifugal, diffusive manifestations, related and indispensable as these are. Were not this higher representation of energy dominant, even though by a margin too fine for measurement to determine, the ego, the society, the race, and the cosmos inhabited by them would not hold together.

But it is in the spiritual realm that this is most familiar to us and it is called by the name of *love*. There will be a place later in our discussion



for an analysis of this concept but here it may be set down as a manifestation of something that is both energy and cohesion. What is this inscrutable thing that enriches life itself and seems to fulfill it in self-giving? Its analogues in nature have engaged the study of the scientists all the way from the geologist to the sociologist, and the fancies of the poet as well as the reflections of the philosopher have handled it with delight. To the measure in which God, the hypothesis, can be conceived as all-inclusive, all-powerful energy, inclined toward the levels of experience both cosmic and personal that make for growth and cohesion, He may also be conceived as self-giving. The more common way of putting this is to say simply that God is love.

## [ 7 ]

To sum up: the highest meaning that can be given to all that we know must be all-inclusive, all-powerful, all-containing (in terms of the principle of cohesion and unity), and all-loving in terms of self-giving. These concepts are susceptible both of scientific and religious appropriations. When this faith, for such it is (recall our definition), is stated as the highest, can a claim be made for it as being absolute? Or is there the likelihood or possibility that we shall contrive, when we know more, a still higher invention? Of this none can be sure but an illustration will help to put the question within its proper focus. Absolute zero, as the physicists describe it, is the point at which all motion is suspended by the pressure of calculable cold. It has never been reached by the apparatus yet devised to produce it. It is thought to exist, perhaps, in the deep freeze of interstellar space or outside the universe. The opposite of the absolute zero which is perfect immobility cannot be expressed by an integer but it can properly be conceived as perfect mobility. If motion is basic to life, the higher the degree of mobility, the higher the quality of life. Thus the mind that by means of idea roves the universe is the symbol of high mobility, and the mind, or energy of God that represents a mobility beside which the widest ranging of the human intellect seems fairly stationary can, for all practical purposes, be regarded as the infinite opposite of the absolute zero of immobility. At the present point in human understanding it is not possible, or even necessary, for us to go beyond that.

How this experience of God is mediated has been argued, no doubt,

since man first began to think. Some have claimed that the resources within the mind of men are sufficient to explicate and appropriate the empirical fact. Others, recognizing the warp into which experience bends the straight patterns of thought and the inability of reason to dissociate itself from the egoistic pretensions and predilections of the human spirit, lay claim to revelation as the only sure source of knowledge. Thus the debate between reason and revelation has gone on reaching extremes that tend, like the fabled Kilkenny cats, to eat each other up.

Here again, however, there may now be found a convergence of emphasis. After all, can a dichotomy between reason and revelation be objectively supported? Is not all reason, meaning the unmediated (if any) processes of cold logic, a revelation? Is not the very orderliness of syllogistic reasoning a revelation of the unitive basis of thought? Does man believe in logic by logic? Does he not assume (revelation) the logic of logic before he sets his premises down? If reason is, in this manner of thinking, revelation, then is not revelation reason? Unless revelation means exclusively the mystical intuitions of certain highly sensitive receptors of translogical truths, revelation itself can be known for what it is only by the processes of reason. How else? In so far as the disciplines of science and religion have been separated as rational and revealed, or as empirical and intuitive, they have been apprehended in a false and uncredited dichotomy. All experience, we have said, is empirical whether it be falling rain or falling in love. Every empirical fact, by the same token, is apprehended by reason-revelation.

[ 8 ]

One final question here: Is God, the highest meaning that can be given to all we know, to be qualified also by consciousness? There have been efforts made to exclude this factor from the scheme of things and to allow the all-inclusive, dynamic, unitive Thing to be understood as being void of consciousness. To this it would seem sufficient to say that so far as we know, consciousness is the most significant fact in the universe; that it is the highest manifestation of life, whether life be evinced by the interfusion of magnetic fields or the cerebral activities of the brain. For this reason the intercommunication between units of consciousness on those levels of life where it exists and to the degree



that the level of life allows, is the highest type of action we know. To deny this to the highest invention or hypothesis we can devise would seem to be without reasonable support.

This concept of God which has been set forth as the grand hypothesis of theistic faith has been correlated to the Christian system of thought in two ways. First through community: here man living, thinking, planning, creating, loving, energizing, captures and discloses the highest spiritual values he can know. Man's half-successes or failures that bedevil community cannot falsify or cancel the conclusion that so far as human experience is any guide, it is in the fact of community that the highest energies, whether of growth or destruction, of nuclear weapons or prayer, are discovered and released. They may not always be wise; when they are not, man pays the penalty. They may not always be good; when they are not judgment falls upon the evil both from the level of the community of man and from the transcendent level of the community of God. Nevertheless, community is a revealer of the nature of man, and of God, and of the nature of man's relation to man and man's relation to God.

The second explication of the grand invention comes to the Christian through Jesus Christ. For the Christian and the Christian community, he is the incomparable demonstration of spiritual power on the level of history. Consistently, so far as we know, he maintained that his energy came not from what the mind of our times so glibly calls nature (cf. the bread-into-stone temptation) but from God. The religious mind of his people was not interested in nature as a theory. Nature revealed the glory of God, it did not present a rationale for deity. And yet we have no reason for thinking that he felt there was anything in the effortless growth and loveliness of the lily that separated nature from God or explained nature without God. To Jesus, God was the highest explanation of all that he knew.

This then is the Christian invention, from the perspectives herein outlined. Alongside this rule of faith we shall undertake to lay the major experiences of life in the effort to discover whether it enables us to see all experience in more spacious dimensions than the classical patterns of naturalism provide, and whether, in terms of moral obligation, this grand hypothesis makes any practical difference in the way we do or should behave.

## Chapter III

### God and History

#### [ 1 ]

HISTORY is the chronometer of time. Time is to events what ether is to light. So runs the common-sense view. There was a time when it was thought necessary in the study of physics and astronomy to invent the idea of a medium that filled all space outside the atmospheric envelope within which our planet spins. Through this, and by means of it, light radiated, refracted, diffused, and polarized; and somehow, by waves or particles or both (wavicles) electromagnetic energy moved. What water is to a fish and air is to a bird, ether was to the radioactive bits that move through space.

Similarly there had to be invented the idea of a medium through which events moved, generally forward. *Forward* was not altogether a satisfactory invention in itself for it assumed a point in the time-medium from which direction could be described. This is as difficult as fixing a point in the waters that cover the earth from which the motion of a fish can be plotted or a point in the air, from which the bird's flight can be seen as a forward motion. Of course the bird and the fish move forward in their respective media. A bird flying backward is something as yet unreported by ornithologists; and if a fish can swim backward it is a skill acquired by the pet fish that have nothing else to do but practice reverse motions in the aquariums of amateur ichthyologists. Yet to nonprofessional reflections about time it does appear that events move forward. What happened at nine o'clock was *before* what happened at ten. Episodes last for longer or shorter intervals and they are concatenated into an unbroken line. Past, present, and future run along without a break.



To be sure, there is the necessity of dividing or sectionalizing the line for the convenience of human behavior and thought: ages, eras, generations, lives, years, months, days, hours, etc., these are time measurements, the event being the ultimate gauge of time's movement. But time's stout line cannot be frayed or snipped. This medium within which events lie is illimitably continuous. As easy to fragment the sea or the air as time's perpetual cycle—for so it has been regarded by some—or its endless extension. It had no beginning and will have no end nor is there, along its interminable length, any point where it has been stayed or hindered. So history, we have been told, is the dial, graduated by measurements infinitesimally minute or infinitely vast, on which the movement of time is indicated. If there should arrive unexpectedly a historic blank during which, for one terrifying interval literally nothing happened, this would simply mean that the clock had stopped, not that time had stood still.

This, we have said, is the common-sense view of the relation of time to history but it has been a long time since this simple notion was first disputed. In the sixth to fifth centuries B.C., Parmenides argued with Heraclitus that all change and becoming that assumed a time-medium for their metamorphosis, were irrational illusions. His honorable opponent, for some undisclosed reason called "the weeping philosopher," responded that except for change there was nothing at all. This may have been the reason for his tears. Their argument is still carried on and the dispute still unresolved.

Newton and Leibnitz, in that segment of time and history called the eighteenth century, argued the question in their own fashion. Time, claimed Sir Isaac, was independent and prior to events. "Absolute time, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature flows equably without regard to anything external." This was the common-sense view stated with sophistication. Thus he put his case, and his somewhat younger contemporary Isaac Watts soon had the saints singing Newtonian mechanics in the majestic strophes of the famous hymn:

Time, like an ever rolling stream  
Bears all its sons away;  
They fly forgotten as a dream  
Dies at the opening day.

This poetic invention has much to make it appealing to the sons of time, but Leibnitz resisted it in favor of the more precise formulations of mathematics. Time is formed (invented) by events and the relations that exist between them, he said. Time is a construct of episodes. Thus he discarded the independent time-medium as modern physicists have dismissed the ether and for not dissimilar reasons. It was no longer needed. This was the initial step in the direction of the invention of spacetime in which both space and time are inseparable though they are perceptually distinct. This at first was as shocking as would be the assertion that the sea and the sky are inseparable though perceptually distinct.

The spacetime invention was eventually to be displaced by the formulation of the four-dimensional continuum as a hypothesis within which the unity of space and time is seen by the inclusion of the component of time along with the length, width, and height of spacial relations. Now, we are told, spacetime is perceived physically as a construct determined by the relationships among four-dimensional world events. Thus the universe includes space with all its events and objects, as well as time with all its motions and changes.

[ 2 ]

The problem of time is neither as urgent nor as intriguing as the problem of history. Man can measure time but he can make history, or at least he thinks he can. Of one thing he has a right to be confident: if history is understood as the orderly record of events he can unquestionably keep the record. If history is regarded as the event itself, man may find himself on a somewhat deeper level than a page in a history book, but he is still relatively free from the subtleties involved in his study of time. For this reason historians have more to say than metaphysicians and what they say is more interesting. Heraclitus, for some reason, wept as he contemplated the bafflement of change, but his contemporary Herodotus had a lively time writing what he grandiosely called *Universal History*. A similar contrast might be made between the speculations of Parmenides and the historical criticism of Thucydides and Polybius who saw history in more precise forms than the metaphysics of the philosophers or even the semipropagandist tales of Herodotus. Today, when historians make somewhat half-hearted claims to the status of an exact science for their interest, they exhibit a caution



and a sense of objectivity that are reflected in the methodology of modern critical historiography. Metaphysics cannot compete.

The history of *history* is both important and interesting. From the folk tale that took shape almost as soon as man began to use words, from the myth that was the first vehicle of man's timid metaphysical speculations, from the epic of the great deeds of heroes and the saga of the wandering bard, to the impartial and dreary statistics and the methodical records of the present is a long road, but it all indicates something that is both unique and germinal in the human spirit. No matter how bad the record man makes, or how slipshod his keeping of it, he thinks it is significant; it has meaning beyond the simple episode. The guarded codes of temples and occult orders, the self-conscious and self-protective cults, the endless copyings of monks in monasteries—in themselves often made into exquisite works of art—these testify to that basic sense that man's doings are important. When, as we have been recently told, Thomas Jefferson left personal papers that run into an aggregate of more than five million words, we do not dismiss him as an egotist for that reason. On the contrary, we are more likely to applaud his profound sense of the importance of the accurate written record as a guide to the assessment of the significance of his age.

The aspect of the historian's task that involves him not only in keeping present records but in studying old ones is the research project that was given great impetus by the Reformation. Here was a dynamic new movement that had to be rationalized with facts, and these facts had to be dug up and put together convincingly enough to prove a point. But more than facts; significances and meanings pressed for explication. So, following these turgid times new philosophies of history began to claim attention. Why did events happen? asked the metaphysician, and how did they happen? asked the logician. The idea of the invariability of Natural Law led to the notion (Vico) that historical events follow one another undeviatingly in response to Natural Law. History is the result of special social or psychological or economic factors. Carlyle said history was the lengthened shadow of a great man; Hegel saw God at work but within the narrow limits of the *herrenvolk*. What once upon a time in Rome had been understood as the meaning of destiny—*Roma Aeterna*—and in Israel in the Chosen People, had their later parallels in the partial explanations of parochial cultures by their sometimes ecstatic protagonists.

The present interest in history derives less from the refinements of the methods of historical record-keeping and interpretation than from the predicament in which the modern world finds itself. What goes on here? Is there any sense to be made of the last one hundred years of paradoxical advance and retreat, human ingenuity and folly, knowledge of man's private and social tensions and his powerlessness to abate them? What keeps things going, and where are they headed? Is there progress, and how is it assayed? Is there design, and if so whose and what is it, malign, beneficent or capricious? Twenty-one cultures have been born and flourished and sixteen of them have destroyed themselves. Of the remaining five, there is little evidence that they can long resist the madness that will eventually plunge the suicidal dagger into their hearts. Thus Toynbee. These questions are searchingly practical; they do not bother with metaphysics or logic but with history as a guide either in the directions of survival or in preparations for the ultimate debacle.

## [ 3 ]

If history is related to man's faith in any way at all, and if man's faith is his resolve to give the highest possible meaning to all that he knows, what are the ways, if any, in which he has exercised his faith with respect to human experience as it is set within the categories of history?

We are not concerned here with what might properly be called low meanings of history. They have interest of a clinical sort in much the same way as morbidity has wherever it is found. These have been summed up long since by Macbeth's eloquent cynicism.<sup>1</sup> To be sure

<sup>1</sup>Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

*The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, George Lyman Kittredge, Ed. (Boston: Ginn & Co.)



he was in no mood to see life optimistically. His world had narrowed to the dimensions of the castle of Dunsinane and his heart had been frozen both by fear and guilt, and by the word of the Queen's suicide. Nevertheless, within the compass of that moving speech he has given the names by which the low understandings of history might be correctly designated: The Dusty Death Theory, The Brief Candle Theory, The Walking Shadow Theory, The Poor Player Theory, The Idiot's Tale Theory. Here the moods of hopelessness, tentativeness, illusion, pretense, and meaninglessness are serialized. It would not be difficult to find voices, past and present, to speak their understanding of history in such melancholy terms.

But our occupation is with high meanings of history, those that have been less affected—shall we say—by the personal fortunes of those who have set them forth. We suggest three general types: the Cyclical, Organismic, and the Deterministic theories. Each calls for a brief comment.

The idea that time runs in cycles and that history is the congeries of events that give visible outline to time's rolling circumference, has been a very intriguing one. And it may be true! The seventy-five thousand year frequency of its completed turn as set by Plato was wholly arbitrary but long enough to make it unlikely that records would be kept that could disprove it. We humans are now, says Toynbee, only about six thousand years out of animal savagery. What will be going on sixty-nine thousand years from now is hardly a practical question. But that Aristotle and Polybius thought this a plausible invention and that it is the essence of the cycle-of-life theory of the Buddhist philosophers indicate that it is not limited to one place or time or people. If we could be sure of its truth, this theory might be tolerable, though somewhat exasperating to impatient people. The progressive decline of man's fortunes as the wheel turns until it reaches its nadir point is offset by the progressive recovery of his fortunes as it rolls back toward its zenith point. Perhaps one should be content with his ills in the realization that someday others will be wholly spared them. But this sort of altruism, we confess, if it can be called that, is almost impossible to sustain past its initial impulse. Nevertheless the idea of time's giant cycles contains the possibility and therefore the fragile hope of a period of refulgence before the next round of darkness. Still and all, it must

be agreed that the idea is a senseless one. What purpose could be served by such endless repetitions of emptiness and repletion? While Aristotle is regarded as anything but a pessimist, from the perspectives of the present age it is hard to accept his idea without a sense of futility and pessimism. Indeed the centuries that followed Aristotle became increasingly poisoned by hopelessness, and when *Roma Aeterna* fell to the barbarians the answer to the bright hopes of the cyclicalists and those Romans who argued that history's meaning was correlative to the existence of Rome, that answer, we say, was conclusive.

That history is the soil in which cultures grow within the deeper medium of time is what has been called the Organismic hypothesis. Herbert Spencer regarded society as an organism developing in response to immanent laws or of a combination of social, physical, and personal forces. His confidence in the vitality of these organisms was so extravagant as to excite the disdain of later students. He came very close, indeed, to thinking that the total organism represented by the word *history* and comprising all the social components within human experience, could not die. Here was the Fountain of Youth indeed! Bergson discovered the secret of this indestructibility in what he called *Vitalism*. It infused every living organism, physical or social. Oswald Spengler shared the organic view of history but not Bergson's optimism. Indeed the organism which he described in his famous work *The Decline of the West*, was already moribund. It had grown prodigiously since the tenth century but its apogee had been reached by the beginning of the twentieth and he predicted that within the dismal decades of the nineteen hundreds it would wearily find its way into a fathomless grave.

Under the general classification of Deterministic theories of history there is considerable variation. One may say that Fate, insensitive, impersonal, impartial, presides over man's historic destinies. Given another name the idea may find expression in certain types of supernatural tyrants whose playthings the sons of humanity are seen to be. Even the Christian concept of God has been squeezed into this mold and made Him out to be a being wholly other from the plexus of time and event over which He arbitrarily presides. Thus Kierkegaard and his disciples. Still again, as with the Marxist interpretation of history, there are forces that operate through the circumstances of social co-



habitation and action that produce the ideas men think and the conflicts into which differing ideas eventually explode. Once more, even Toynbee, who writes from a profoundly Christian perspective, gets very close at times to a sort of energistic determinism. Life is dynamic, creative, precarious, and man can, if he will, order his own ends. As Vico gave to his historic speculations color that he got from the ideas of Natural Law in his times, and as Spencer and Marx and Bergson incorporated the evolutionary inventions of Darwin into their organismic explanations, so Toynbee appears to have been affected by the dynamism of the new physics of our day. Challenge and Response, which is the secret of man's emergence from barbarism, is suggestive both of the energy balance that modern physics must maintain, and of the polarities of electromagnetic current. The explanation of the decline of modern civilization he finds in "a failure or loss of nerve." This too is a dynamic concept—the impairment of the instrument, the reduction of the current, the exhaustion of the reactor.

These all, we say, are efforts to give high meaning to what is called history and there has been and still is in them, both elevated purpose and plausibility. It is not pertinent to our study to present a criticism of them. Our purpose is served by this summary description. Relevant to all of them, however, is the inescapable fact that the events of which history is fashioned are not only events, they are values. Grant the impingement of social and physical influences, events are all vehicled in a human organism that assimilates them and uses them after his own manner to create other episodes that are uniquely his own and which are to him, values. Do physical laws, one may ask, have primacy in historic experiences? Is it not the initiative, the sense of responsibility or destiny of the human spirit that is primary? At least this much can be said: were there no human beings, there would be no history, no matter how heavily cluttered up time might become with events.

However high these inventions may be thought to be, the tendency of them all—the cyclic, organismic, and deterministic—is to create a sense of ultimate pessimism, limitation, and futility. If this is the highest level of invention we can reach, we may well return to the felicitous Omar and let him say:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *The Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám.

The worldly hope men set their hearts upon  
 Turns ashes—or it prospers; and anon,  
 Like snow upon the desert's dusty face,  
 Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.

That for the cyclicalists. And for the determinists this:

Impotent pieces of the game he plays  
 Upon the checkerboard of nights and days;  
 Hither and thither moves and checks and slays,  
 And one by one back in the closet lays.

Is it possible to find a convergence in which Vico and Spencer and Kierkegaard can be found together? Can we see history as the episodic record of a seemingly endless struggle of forces, ideals, wills, in conflict with one another and as often with the divine will? It may be that we can find in such a situation the creativity with which the Divine has purposely endowed us.

[ 4 ]

A religious interpretation of history undertakes to find its highest meaning in terms of a religious invention, or to put it more simply and in the familiar language of the Christian tradition, God is the meaning of history. As we have tried to understand what *God* means in this context we have made use of the ideas of all-inclusiveness, dynamism, cohesion, and consciousness (love).

At this point we must confess to a difficulty that is partly due to language but is largely the result of the limitations to which the mind is subject. How can we think of God as inclusive of time? To include time He must be outside it. This is a paradox. We deal rather glibly with the problem by the use of such words as *transtemporal* and *extra-cosmic* but the barriers of thought are not lifted by the leverage of multisyllables. For all we know time has no relevance to God. We agree that in terms of duration—"a day is as a thousand years"—it is unimportant to Him. If then it has no significance as duration, what significance can it have? Modern science has had to make time a component of a four-dimensional continuum to give it meaning, but however helpful this is for certain areas of thought, it does not do much for our thought of God in relation to time. For obviously, if He is all-inclusive, He stands outside the time-space continuum, whatever other



relationships He may sustain to the universe we know. It is because of this problem that we have given space and time (spacetime?) to the brief discussion of the relation of time to history that has gone before.

When we come to history we are on somewhat firmer ground for the Hebrew-Christian tradition has much to say on this point. "God was in the beginning"; this means in the beginning of the historic process. Nothing is said about the beginning of time. With this giant invention—God—the epic poem of Genesis is introduced. Here, with the eloquence of simplicity, we find God outside history as its creator but within it as its sustainer and energy of cohesion. The order of the cosmos is hieratic but at the same time it is of the nature of a community. From the great lights to the tiniest creeping things there is a descent in grandeur without the loss of the intricate relationships through which everything that is, coheres. Early in the *mythos* we discern the clear intimations of purpose. Man is created as something more than an artifact, his breath is inhaled from the lungs of God, his soul is made alive by the energy of divine contact, he is given status and authority and a charter of freedom which he will use to exalt or destroy himself.

The story of the development of the people of Israel never departs from the deep sense that what is falling out to them of good or ill, is of the divine providence. Crudely put and often mistakenly understood, this was never altogether lost from the Hebrew mind. In political affairs Yaweh was the center of cohesion and power; in their domestic and social experience He was father and friend. Ultimately He would subsume all things, events, and persons, under perfect dominion. All peoples would someday converge upon the mountain of Zion and the tranquillity of the perfect community of God and man would subdue even the natural enmities of the beasts. The lion would lie down with the lamb. The aim of this ageless pilgrimage was the city of God, the inhabitants of which would be the new moral genus, the sons of the Most High.

It is unnecessary to follow the development of this invention or its vagaries. Frustrations of national hope and the shrinking of the world horizon to the skylines about Jerusalem led to the aberrations of eschatology and the expectations of misconceived Messianism. Nevertheless in the whole Biblical record the central fact of God as the ordainer, and support, and guide of history was always real. To the

saint He was nearby in solace, to the sinner imminent in judgment; to the good ruler He was stronger than an army, to the apostate king more terrible than a barbarian invasion.

## [ 5 ]

As this invention—this effort to understand history in terms of God (understood as our study has set Him forth)—has been elaborated in subsequent ages of what we call Christian history, its central emphasis has not been lost. Within three years of the sacking of Rome, Augustine wrote *The City of God* A.D. 410; Campanella, as the Renaissance was dispelling the shadows of the Dark Ages, wrote *The City of the Sun*; Calvin, at the end of the Thirty Years' War, started a city of God, not in a book but in a town; and Milton, during the threatening disorder of the democratic revolution in England, wrote *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Each of these massive explications of the fact of God as central to history was born of crisis. This explains what to us may seem like distortions at certain points, but what we cannot be allowed to forget is that God was the highest explanation they could invent to explain events and to give them their true value. Malebranche, one of the early Cartesians (1638-1715), who was particularly interested in the problem of the relation of mind-states to body-actions, concluded that the two could not, because of their totally different nature, interact. But it occurred to him that God enacts physical movements "on the occasion" of certain corresponding mental states. This led him ultimately to the hypothesis that God's initiative was the real cause of all events.

Furthermore—and again in spite of overemphasis here and there on marginal matters—the significance given to events (or their value) was understood in terms of what the Christian religion has always called *Redemption*. No matter if redemption was to be accomplished by cataclysm (John of Patmos) or by some final achievement of public and personal good through the power of reason (Hegel), man's ultimate return to the community of God was never doubted. And yet man, looking at the pageant that time unrolls before his curious eyes, will take one of three attitudes: he will despair, he will be indifferent, or he will hope. To the Christian interpretation of history, hope is the proper response to make.



This is easy to say. Is it easy to support? We have pointed out the interest—one might even say the obsession—with which history is studied by the serious mind of the day. Despair is the result for some, irresponsible indifference for others. What reason does the Christian invention offer to hope? The "time of troubles" in which Toynbee says we are living is certainly no less critical than those that produced the great responses listed above. Are there any facts that challenge the Christian faith in God as the meaning of history?

Since we cannot abstract ourselves from the circumstances within which we live we will be unable to see things with proper detachment, and this subjective bias will have to be carefully watched for. And yet, objectively, is there not in the present chaos, evidence of the indifference of God to this scheme of things for which, in our view, He is responsible? If He is the meaning of history, what does history mean to Him? We do not know, and not knowing we easily set down to indifference what may very well be something else—a reflection, for example, of our faulty understanding of what time is. We who are creatures of time and history have difficulty in believing that what to us may seem like chaos, to the perspectives of God may be order; what to us seems like indifference may to God be an incredibly intense concentration. It is easy for us to project our sense of frustration in the present historic milieu to the frustration of God—which it may not be. Similarly the apparent increase of evil and human depravity. Add this to social and political insecurity and we can make out a strong case for the malignancy of the "destiny that shapes our ends." We must remember, however, that here again we may be afflicted by moral and spiritual myopia that blurs the true picture of things.

With all the allowance necessary for these very normal reactions, there is still something that can be said for the Christian understanding of history. We have spoken of the necessity of understanding God as energy, consciously directed toward cohesion. We have no difficulty with the concept of dynamism in a world as dynamic as ours. What of cohesion? Remember that this invention has been central to the oldest and most viable culture extant today. Is this longevity to be understood in terms of the cohesive energies of God? We must be careful here. Things have held together but they may at any time explode into bits. Assuming this depressing possibility to be altogether reasonable, does

that cancel out either the concern or the control of God over history? Only if we limit our concept of God to the dimensions of our globe. It is the impossibility of the human mind to think of God except as within time and history that makes us conclude that the purposes of God would be frustrated by complete and planetary chaos upon this lowly orb. Such a concept of God as the meaning of history would limit Him to *our* history. That has been the point at which both thinking and hope break down. Such a deity would be an exclusive God, exclusively related to man and his earthly habitation, not an inclusive one. If He is assumed to be all-inclusive He must take in all time, past, present, future, and all history. More still, He must include all nontime and nonhistory. This may stretch our brains a bit, but even so it might be a help to more realistic understanding if we gave our concept its properly undimensioned dimensions.

There is a moral consideration important for us at this point. If what we have said is true, quoting Professor Montagu above, then ultimately only the good—understood as the energy that integrates and coheres—can endure. Man's misuse of the spacetime segment of experience within which he lives has invited judgment. It is judgment that is implicit in every event as well as judgment that lies in God—or the relation of God to the total process of history. Whether we like it or understand it, this fact must allow for what appears to myopic eyes the moral bafflement of the historic process at certain points in spacetime. History shows suffering, decline, death.<sup>3</sup> But it has been germane to the Christian understanding of history that suffering, decline, and death can and may be the media through which humanity is learning how to live under the judgment of event and Deity within spacetime. It is a long (here the problem of Time as duration again) and painful discipline but for all that it need not in any way be alien to the purposes of One who experiences none of the disabilities of the spacetime continuum within which He has set this modicum of His universal enterprise, with mankind placed for a moment at its perilous center.

[ 6 ]

Therefore, Christian faith (remember our definition) confronted by what has been disarmingly called *the riddle of the Universe*, says: God

<sup>3</sup> Spengler, *op. cit.*



is the highest meaning that can be given to time and history. This does not save us from the necessity of putting together as best we can the pieces of the puzzle, but it does protect us from the ultimate pessimism, meaninglessness, and futility that are the heart and issue of narrow, fragmented and episodic explanations. Whether the hypothesis of God carries conviction to those who are most grievously bedeviled by the historic process and who, in default of reasons for faith abandon themselves to despair and the desire for death, it still may be claimed that it, as no other invention, provides a framework within which we can see an inexhaustible, cohesive, self-conscious, and purposefully directed energy in a four-dimensional timespace continuum, working within moral categories to achieve an ultimate and ineffable end.

If this is true, it lays moral obligations on us in terms of what we assume history to be. This is not so easy to come to terms with. It daunts us, if we are modest, to think that we can serve the cosmic purposes of God. This has led, of course, to indescribable folly and wickedness at times. It frightens us, if we are evil, to think that to thwart His purposes is to incur the wrath and the judgment of the Eternal. This has led to defiance at one extreme and to repentance and redemption at the other. This is the language of moral theology but it is not, for that reason, meaningless to those who see value and disvalue—or just plain good and evil—as the result of the observance or the violation of natural law. But of this we shall have more to say as our study proceeds. In the meantime a poet suggests:

Let there be God, say I. And what I've done  
Goes onward like the splendor of the Sun  
And rises up in rapture and is one  
With the white power of conscience that commands.<sup>4</sup>

That makes a difference!

<sup>4</sup> Siegfried Sassoon: "The Power and the Glory," from *The Heart's Journey* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1929).

## Chapter IV

### God and Man

WE ARE trying to establish the proposition that the invention of the idea of God, which is, according to our definition of faith, its highest exercise, makes the important if not the definitive difference in the nature of all human experience and enterprise. There are high meanings given to all that we know that supply both intellectual and moral certitude and bearing. The hypotheses of Natural Science go very far in this direction. Sometimes they have appeared to point to positions opposite to those of philosophy and religion but we have tried to make a case for the ready convergence of naturalism and religion in a grand hypothesis acceptable to both. The meaning that religion (theism) gives to all that we know sets forth an idea of God that is all-inclusive, dynamic, cohesive, and self-conscious love. Conceived within these categories, time and history are more satisfyingly conceived than is possible within the limited, finite, meaningless fortuities of what, for lack of a better word, must be called *lower* inventions.

#### [ 1 ]

What are we to think about man? Here is an invitation to both fascination and fatigue. To this subject the most distinguished compendium of wisdom allocates a scant dozen lines, giving to *Mammals* as many pages. To be sure under *Anthropology* the subject is given extensive treatment, no little of which is hypothetical, as in the nature of the case it must be. What we think of man is as important as what we think of God. Alexander Pope put it more strongly in his famous *Essay on Man*.



Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,  
The proper study of mankind is man.

We differ with the poet's feeling that there is presumption in scanning God, but we agree to make the proper effort to know ourselves. Indeed we consent to this largely for the reason that we believe that a knowledge of ourselves may supply us with important suggestions about many other things, including even God.

Let us be prepared to face the fact that the current mood does not reflect too exalted an estimate of this bungling biped. A recent comment by the author of best-selling novels—novels, by the way, are almost unanimously disparaging in their estimate of human nature—has said:<sup>1</sup> "Life is intensely interesting in whatever direction it may take, happy or tragic; and it is a peculiarity of the human species that the unhappy holds more interest for us than the happy. . . . I have read enough to know that the best minds of the past and the present—poets, novelists, philosophers—have one and all been pessimistic about man." Such a statement deserves both weight and analysis though the latter might reduce the former. Certainly the unanimous pessimism of poets, novelists, and philosophers "one and all" would be difficult to document, but it is a clear expression of the mind of many who have access to the instruments that shuttle opinions back and forth, weaving the fabric and pattern of most of what we call contemporary thinking.

One does not find it difficult to be depressed. Take the business of man's health, for example. Half the human beings living today are sick. Half a billion have dysentery, three hundred millions are malarial. Most Egyptians have a blood-fluke disease transmitted from snails through water. This list can be dismally extended and accounted for partly by the fact that a third of humanity, sick and well, never have enough to eat by minimum dietary health standards. Here spins one of the most disturbing of vicious cycles: sick farmers—and the tillers of the soil are the least healthy of all the globe's people—do not grow enough food for themselves or for their hungry neighbors. Inadequate rations means increased illness from simple rickets to more elaborate vitamin deficiencies; and the more disease there is, the less food there

<sup>1</sup> Charles Jackson, author of *Lost Weekend*, etc., in *Cosmopolitan*, 1950.

will be.<sup>2</sup> To this disquieting picture must be added the fact that the high-level culture areas within which the answers to public health and personal hygiene are known, have an increasing incidence of coronary and neural illnesses. "Man," a wit has lately commented with rather mordant realism, "is still bedeviled by disease, depravity and death. The first fills our hospitals, the second our jails, and the third our cemeteries." Given time, by the doleful predictions of some, disease will soon empty the hospitals and jails and consign us all to permanent positions in Necropolis.

Others, no doubt enjoying a momentary state of physical and mental euphoria, take a less dim view of the genus. He is too busy to get either sick or worried. The following whimsy is quoted from the *Chattanooga Times* under the caption "Busy Living":

Perhaps it's only natural to have "that tired feeling."

We have been told this is what happens to a normal adult of average weight every 24 hours:

His heart beats 103,689 times (perhaps more if he's young and it's spring).

His blood travels 168,000,000 miles. (He might well inquire, it seems to us, "Is this trip necessary?")

He breathes 23,040 times.

He inhales 438 cubic feet of air.

He eats  $3\frac{1}{4}$  pounds of food.

He drinks 2.9 pounds of liquids.

He gives off 85.6 degrees of Fahrenheit in heat.

He generates 450 foot tons in energy.

He speaks 4,800 words (that is if he can get a word in edgewise with those who speak 48,000).

He moves 750 major muscles.

He exercises 7,000,000 brain cells (a gross exaggeration for some we know).

All of this, of course, comes about in merely staying alive. The exertion of really living is added on top.

At any rate, almost anybody can say, "I'm too busy," with some justification.

There is more than gentle amusement in this record of the normal adult's autonomic industry. We know that "that tired feeling" does not

<sup>2</sup> This is the thesis of Charles Morrow Wilson, *One Half the People, Doctors and the Crisis of World Health*, New York: William Sloan Associates, 1949.



come "merely staying alive." "The exertion of really living" is correctly added to the gross amount of physical activity. By this we assume the editor meant that there is something that gives to life its real quality that cannot be included in a clinical record. And it is in that area that modern man suffers his most stubborn disabilities.

In general, there is no limit to the variety and concentration with which man looks at himself. He can be bitter and biased, kind and cruel, innocent and cynical, lyrical and infuriated, and find support for every generalization that—however unconvincing—can be made. For man is sick. He is busy. He is also pathetic, comic, noble, base. He is a sage and a fool, a saint and a scoundrel. Sensitive and gross he can be artist and profligate at the same time; the innocence of childhood can combine with the calculations of adulthood to extenuate or bless hideous evil. He can accept wretchedness with saintly resignation or whimper at minor irritations with childish petulance. He is not easy to understand even as an animal. Can he be understood as a person?

The effort will never be abandoned, for man seeks to understand himself for his own benefit if for no more comprehensive reasons. His egoism—which for the moment may be taken to mean his essential self—will not allow him to think of himself as less than the most important factor in all he knows about the universal equation. To be sure, this distorts his reading of the equation and makes him not a little ridiculous at times. He will grandly say that he can, by an egoistic tour de force, positionize himself outside the confusion and survey it with passionless detachment. He will be boundlessly confident of what he says he sees—for a while; and if he has to change his judgment, he will do so without a qualm. This is because man *is* by his nature at the center of the event that touches him. Others may see him in a peripheral relation; he sees himself in the middle, and all he says is determined by his sense of central importance.

There is no escape from this, even by the new science of cybernetics, for man's highest inventive genius cannot abstract him from the center of the event. The incredible performances of the electronic "brains" are not the work of brains at all. What this marvel of ingenuity cannot do is imagine, invent, or construct another like itself. Nor can it confront, much less solve the problem of man's meaning. There will be no coquetties between these machines resulting in romantic notions and

small fry. Man, who is the major cause of his own felicity and/or wretchedness, must find the answer to the question he endlessly puts to himself about himself.

[ 2 ]

Ready answers to the question *What is man?* are to be had in nearly every field of interest and inquiry. Since Linnaeus (1707-1778) defied the metaphysics and theology of his day and classified man zoologically, every scientific interest has converged on him. The idea that the soul formed an impossible wall between man and other mammals, giving him a position that was in but not of the animal world, may be more plausible today than it was when Buffon and Cuvier defended it, but it was an invention that forbade the impious to deal with man as he dealt with his humbler co-generes. From the beginning of the efforts to formalize thought on this subject, the fact of the differences between man and other animals—however they were described or accounted for—stumped the experts. Prichard, accorded the distinction of being the father of modern anthropology, said, in 1843: "That creatures should exist so nearly approaching each other in all the particulars of their physical structure, and yet differing so immeasurably in their endowments and capabilities, would be a fact hard to believe, if it were not manifest to our observation."<sup>3</sup> It is this question that still perplexes the naturalist: how account for the obvious factors in man the animal that make him something that cannot be precisely fit into a mammalian category?

It has not been left to scientists. Every cracker-barrel sage has his notion and defends it with no less confidence than the ivory-tower savant. Such inventions run all the way from man, a mysteriously endowed automaton, a puppet on a string, a victim of a fate he resists with something called nobility, to a wretched, self-controlled, stupid, sniveling, opinionated mistake. He lives with glory and honor and dies with a heroic gesture of farewell, or he lives without meaning and dies without dignity.

Every artist who takes seriously his vocation expresses his idea of man. A comparison of the sculpture of Phidias and Epstein, of the painting of El Greco and Picasso, of the music of Beethoven and

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., Vol. II, p. 108.



Stravinsky, and of the drama of Aeschylus and O'Neill exhibits basically different ideas about what man is. No less do the political systems of our time manifest basic attitudes toward man. Of this more is to be said later. Our point is that never more than in our times has man been the question of questions and the answer of answers. The taxi driver in New York who confided to his fare that "everybody is dopes" was no doubt as able to support his unflattering judgment as the poet who shared with Israel his certainty that man and the son of man are little lower than the angels.

It seems possible to bring this variety of opinion within the limits of two fairly spacious generalizations. The first looks at man and says he is only a highly developed animal; the second says man is an undeveloped god. In the first instance there is substantial agreement as to what an animal is; in the second there is only minor disagreement as to what a god may be.

Most of the discussions of the natural sciences fall within the first generalization. The anthropologist sees man as an animal that had to forage, and because of this necessity learned to hunt (and make weapons to kill his quarry with), and finally learned the arts of planting crops and domesticating animals as his chief reliance for foodstuffs. Each of these phases produced ways of living. When he foraged he was little different from a wolf; when he hunted he developed the technique of the pack; when he began planting crops and herding animals he built villages and kraals, learned to exercise crude authority over his fellows also and thus began the chief-and-subject phase of culture. Finally he has managed, through the last few centuries, to organize himself into powerful groups that, because of their composite strength, threaten one another, after the manner of hunting packs or co-operate after the manner of villagers. This is by no means the whole story, but it puts what it has to say within the framework of man as only a highly developed animal. "I remain," says Stewart,<sup>4</sup> speaking as man, "and seem likely to remain, a somewhat altered fish, a slightly remodeled ape." One cannot forbear the observation that never ape, original or remodeled, made an observation like that.

Man as a highly developed animal may exhibit traits that suggest an

<sup>4</sup> George R. Stewart, *Man: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1946, p. 291.

altered fish or a remodeled ape but what has taken place in his development seems more than alteration or remodeling. The biochemist and the physiologist have discovered complexities of tissue and process that are on a level higher than fish or ape no matter how extensive the alteration or how complete the remodeling may be said to be. Man can understand what he is only if he sees himself within the context of nature, and yet if his understanding does not allow for factors that transcend nature, his knowledge of himself will be faulty. The complexity of his nervous system and the organization of his glandular chemistry may to some seem a handicap. Had man the neural equipment of a worm he would share the worm's immunity to neurotic illness. But for this exemption he would pay the price of reorganizing his behavior on the worm level. Concomitant to the factor of neural complexity is the fact that all his life shall be complex; and it is by this elaboration of chemical and neurological endowment that his highest functions are possible. They are the means through which he sublimates the natural order of which he is a part, and by which he creates things that never were on land or sea. This superstructure which he builds will not be separated from the instinctual foundation which is part of the physical inheritance which accompanies his arrival on the cosmic scene, but the foundation will not determine what he erects above it. There is something in man, some of our materialists tell us, that has the potential equality and energy of self-consciousness and it is this he seems able to direct in such a way as lifts him, in many of life's experiences, above the causal nexus.

## [ 3 ]

It is evident that the effort to contain man within the framework of a highly developed animal poses difficulties even for the anthropologist, the biochemist, and the physiologist. For the psychologist the problem is compounded by the difficulties encountered in the effort to classify man as a thinking creature and understand what goes on when he thinks. For this reason, though psychology does not state it thus, man is regarded as an underdeveloped god. This is no nod in the direction of theistic beliefs; it is the use of a word that is customarily employed to indicate a relation in the scale of being. Man exhibits qualities, it is said, that cannot satisfactorily be subsumed under the order of nature.



If they are not to be called supernatural, they may be described as sub-supernature. This is simply a fancier way of saying that man is of nature and yet above it, and it stops discreetly at a point short of claims of supernaturalistic embellishments.

The problem of the psychologist lies in the nature of human understanding. Not in philosophical terms but in the functions of the cerebrum. There is perhaps some residual support for the once popular notion that the brain secretes ideas, but it is not impressive any more. But more puzzling than the origin of the pure thought is the directed use of it. It is at this point that there emerges man's unique wish to improve himself, both by changing his environment and by adapting himself to it, and his equally unique capacity to do this with measurable success. This is what we mean by *character*, a word that in its origin meant an engraved mark that could not be erased or eroded. It means just that in this connection. Man's character is different from the character of any other animal. No matter how bestial his behavior, his character cannot be erased; for good or evil, he is forever known as man.

This is the basis for civilization, a phenomenon that has appeared only recently by the time measurements of history. Civilizations, however they are to be described in essence, cannot be understood in origin except as the result of the directed thoughts of men. This *characteristic* separates man from the lesser creatures. It may be argued that a hive or an anthill is better organized than a modern city but it is man who sees and understands this, not the bees or the ants. We must not forget that the romantic and perhaps properly descriptive names by which workers, drones, warriors, and even queens are designated are applied by men and not by the uncomprehending insects themselves.

This, we must admit, is enigmatical. The power by which man thinks, applies his thoughts both to creativity and destruction, looks inwardly and discovers his selfhood and outwardly and finds his fellows and seeks, blunderingly perhaps, but unrestingly to come to terms with both—here are some things that secretions and electromagnetic impulses do not explain. Whether they are to man's advantage or not may be arguable; it cannot be disputed that they set him in a different category.

It is not unflattering to man to call him an underdeveloped god. Most

of us would settle for that even though in the contract, written perhaps in small print and therefore overlooked, there was contained a warning to man's prideful ego. Similarly many of us are not a little pleased to be regarded as highly developed animals. We unquestionably give much if not most of our time to animal satisfactions and nothing frightens us quite as much as the presumption of other highly developed animals that threaten to pre-empt our pasturelands and diminish our pride in ourselves and our possessions. This moves us over into the realm of the moral factors in the experience of man the thinking animal, a matter that must be considered in its proper place. The fact remains that we do not feel unduly cast down in spirit (there's an obtrusive word!) if we are catalogued by some of the accredited friends of humanity as highly developed animals or underdeveloped gods. It would be hard to say which of the two pleases us more.

## [ 4 ]

Our concern, however, is not with what pleases us or with what strikes us as a high estimate of the nature of man. We want to know what the hypothesis that God is the highest meaning of all that we know does to our concept of man. Is it higher than those we have been discussing? Is it, because it assumes the elements of all-inclusiveness, dynamism, cohesiveness and self-consciousness, loving, purpose, the highest we can invent? And what difference does it make to man as he looks at himself, laid along the line of that great assumption? If we abandon the highest meaning we must accept a lower one, deliberately or by default. Because man is what he is he cannot be content with meaninglessness.

In the Hebrew-Christian tradition, the meaning of man has had one central emphasis though its auxiliary significances have been both varied and equivocal. To read the great epic of creation is to discover man created in the image of God and given dominion over all the works of the Creator's busy and ingenious hands. To read the urbane cynicism of Koheleth<sup>5</sup> the Vanitarian, is to be confronted with the dismal fact that man and all his goings on are the vanity of all vanities. We discover also that the poetic apostrophe (Psalm 8:5) to man as little lower than the angels (undeveloped god?) is disputed by the shocking comment

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Eccles. 1:1-11.



(Psalm 83:10) of another poet that certain groups, for the moment distasteful, should become as dung. It would be absurd to demand that so various a lore as the writings of the Hebrew saints and sages should have only one undeviating estimate of what man is. Koheleth may have had a sluggish liver and poets One and Two may have had ample external reasons for their insights. At the same time it must be observed that the total impact of the thought of these ancient people pounded relentlessly at the fact that to them, man was not to be understood except as he was related to God. This did not denature him or separate him from the physical environment in which he was placed. Indeed he was formed *out of the dust of the ground*, dust that was infused with the mysterious energy of life by the direct creative action of the Creator. God, this is to say, was the highest meaning that could be given to all that they knew, and that included themselves.

They quite possibly may have been mistaken. Certainly they had no facilities such as we have for dissecting man and exposing his naked physical, psychological, and social essences. What they thought of themselves may be dismissed by some—as by the Positivists, for example—as the inevitable product of the theological stage of thought, that period during which, in default of the data available to the later stages of metaphysical and positive thinking, all men thought in vaguely theological or simple religious categories. At the same time it is generally agreed that the positivistic stage, into which we are thought to have passed, provides for man's inventions about man a much too inflexible frame of reference. Mathematical formulas, as the means of describing what man is, are completely incompetent. Where, for all of Comte's confidence, are we to find an equation that even undertakes to sum up man's essence? All that mathematics can say is that man is represented by  $x$ , the symbol for the unknown quantity. For the unknown quality we are offered no symbol.

It is of course impossible to say whether this ancient concept of man was derived from prior inventions concerning the nature of God or vice versa; whether man was theomorphic or God was anthropomorphic. Man was created in the image of God; that was to ancient Israel the primary and pilot fact.

Did this assumption of origin determine man's meaning? There is an easy error known to philosophers and called *the genetic fallacy*. It calls

for caution lest significance be thought to inhere solely in origin. The meaning of a stained-glass window is not to be found in the sand from which it originated. Thus, it may be argued, even the assumption that man is the creation of God does not necessarily establish either his essence or his importance. Agreed. And yet where origin is inseparable from purpose, significance is also inseparable. A carpenter who makes a churn may use it as a chair, but if his purpose is to provide comfortable rest and not butter, his product will be differently fashioned.

Clearly the connection in the ancient mind between God and man's origin was tied in with a profound intention that was felt to have activated the whole creative enterprise. So far as this planet was concerned the plan was going to take a long time to spell itself out and before it was consummated it would pass through cycles of success and failure which only the patience of God Himself could bear. In order to do his share in bringing creation to its ultimate completion man was given a *living soul*. This we understand to mean the quality that distinguishes him from the lesser brutes and the composite of the powers by which he was to exercise his initiative in conformity with the cosmic plan. Perhaps the modern distrust of the word *soul* as it has been used and abused has deflected our attention from the magnitude of the invention it contains. *Living soul* does not mean the soul of life, a phrase in which the substantive *life* is emphasized. Life is the perpetual mystery and though certain biochemists predict that the latter half of this century will see the mystery dissolved in a simple new discovery of a chemical reaction, as of today the essence of life is still hidden from us, although it is the commonest of all phenomena. Certainly man's life—as an essence or process—is no different from the life of a beetle. But man's soul, if we understand the meaning of the word at all, is different in essence and process from the beetle's—assuming that the bug has an analogous endowment. It makes little difference whether we call it psyche, ego, personality, self, or—on a lower level—id, libido, the subconscious, or something else. The hard core of meaning that is held within the words *living soul* cannot be ignored, no matter how we think of its origin or of its significance. Substitute *vital ego* for *living soul* or make any other change that seems momentarily more congenial, the essence remains unaltered. And, we repeat, that this essence was of



God and for the purposes of God was the reality deeply seen by the inventors of the religious tradition of the West. God made the difference.

## [ 5 ]

This means that man was and is understood as qualitatively different from all other created things. Those who try to dispute this in naturalistic terms have a formidable assignment, for the essence of man, called by whatever name is not susceptible to a quantitative assay. Man has power that cannot be measured in ergs or dynes, he has impulses that are not electromagnetic, he has affinities that are neither of blood or of gravitation, he has repulsions that are not centrifugal, and he has introversions that are not centripetal.

The inferences that follow are no cause for egotistic celebrations. Those who boast about this preferred status in nature have already succumbed to one of the dangers inherent in it—the peril of self-pride. Rather than boast, one will do well to consider soberly what it means to be of the *genus homo*. If, as we have been saying, God represents to us a constellation of all-inclusiveness, dynamism, cohesiveness, self-directing loving purpose, man, created in God's image, partakes of this awesome cluster of essences which are finally reducible to two factors—understanding and love. Take from man his unique capacity to think and to love, both of which move under or alongside the dynamic impulses of his will, and he falls at once to the level of purely instinctual behavior. Observe him exercising his understanding and love in mercy, pity, peace,<sup>6</sup> or, on the contrary, exercising misunderstanding and anger in folly, cruelty, and frenzy, and we see man being uniquely and unmistakably himself. Why he channels his soul's activity in now one direction and again in another is a different problem. At this point we are concerned to realize that he can do what he does, and—within limits that may lead to confusion but never to cancellation—understands what he is doing and does it because he wants to.

It is just this that makes order possible on the human level. There is, we assume, an orderliness implicit in the idea of God. This is what

<sup>6</sup> This suggests the artless verse of William Blake from his "Divine Image":

"For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love  
Is God our Father dear,  
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love  
Is Man, his child and care."

is customarily spoken of as natural law. Man, however, can create order for himself, or he can try to subvert the natural order to an order of his own. It is at this point that the unique moral (and immoral) element in man is exposed. The human understanding is the factor through which order is contrived. In so far as man is creative or inventive, he is so only by way of bringing into more useful relationships things that already exist, but exist in relations he has not been fully able to employ. This is true whether the thing be an electron or a social entity. It is as pertinent to logic as to physics, for man no more invents new ideas than he invents new atoms. The so-called creation of new chemical elements through atomic fission is simply a matter of the reorganization of existing entities into such perfect co-ordination that something "new" emerges. Similarly new ideas are only the rearranging of ideas that already exist in more orderly and exact relations. New elements and new ideas are not created by man *ex nihilo*. That is the sole prerogative of God.

If what has been said is true, it would seem that man stands in a relation to the experience and fruits of his knowing capacities that is beyond the mere fact of knowing, and lies in the area of doing. The lesser creatures live within an order of which they are not aware and for the maintenance of which they have no obligation. Man, on the contrary, rests in no such otiose Eden. He must do something to keep order, he must police himself for the simple reason that the abandonment of his mind to his instinct is to reduce him to the level of a highly developed animal. Whether it is possible to generalize from this fact, it can be suggested that man, because of his intelligence, becomes the most dangerous of beasts when he abandons himself to his instinct, for the reason that he cannot altogether give himself over to them. He will retain his understanding but use it to justify his instincts. This is, after a manner of speaking, selling his soul to the devil, a favorite theme of folklore and drama.

To maintain order in terms of understanding is therefore a moral obligation. So far as human behavior is concerned moral orderliness is as necessary as rational orderliness. Sin and Stupidity are the twin offspring of human disorder; not identical, perhaps, but often so alike as to be indistinguishable. This needs no extended argument. There may be those who are completely unaware of an inner sense of moral obliga-



tion, the demand for moral orderliness which is the core of conscience, but we suspect them of mental aberration or illness. This sense of the *ought* is mysterious both to naturalism and to theism but to the latter it is a proper inference from the fact of God when to the former it is an irrelevance to the fact of nature. It would seem to follow, therefore, that man's moral sense as well as his understanding must be derived from a higher order of being than the merely natural. At this point the religious tradition is unambiguous: God breathed into man the breath of life and he became a living soul. This says, in the language of metaphor, the moral nature of the Divine was imparted to the human creature. So far as we know it has not been more plausibly explained.

Understanding and love, we have said, is the essence of man's nature. Here love is to man's impulse to moral orderliness what reason is to his urge toward rational orderliness. In this connection love is used not to mean romantic excitement but to suggest the element in the hypothesis of God that provides the cohesive element in all experience whether human or otherwise. In a broad way love is the cement that holds man's relationships with his fellows in order. Its opposite, hate, is what destroys the order. We are aware of the fact that those two elements are present in dialectic conflict in every human relationship and experience. Paradoxically we love whom we hate and hate whom we love. The essence of the moral problem is this unresting and unresolved struggle. Whatever we know about its ultimate outcome, we may be sure that the victory of love is the victory for order; for hate it is chaos.

Are we driven to postulate in the experience of God a similar conflict between love and hate? The early probes of the mystery of Deity saw it thus. The creature God formed with such tenderness was driven in anger from his garden home and ultimately drowned in a global inundation that allowed only one family—and it of dubious moral reputation—to survive as seed-stock for another race. How this came about is explained by the intrusion of alien elements (the serpent) into the cosmic scheme and its consequence is described as man's Fall. There are various factors in this ancient *mythos* that are interesting. For the moment we confine ourselves to one only. What is the meaning of man's Fall?

Does this mean that man as creature was demoted to a lower order of creation because of a symbolic act of rebellion—or, as it may also

be understood, of a worthy act of self-elevation? The former is the conventional understanding. And yet, we fall into difficulties here in regarding man as an entity. The universal man does not exist and therefore does not sin. Only in isolation (ultimately) does a man rebel, yield to the disintegrative energies of hate and thus create chaos within and without himself. For this reason Original Sin as it has been taken to mean a congenital blight—the reason for his demotion in the order of creation—is untenable. The sin of every individual man is his own original sin and for it he is morally judged. It is the result of his conscious and deliberate choice of hate as over against love, of chaos over order. And yet, because he is endowed with love as well as hate—both being integral to his nature—he can be redeemed by love, just as he can be destroyed by hate. Herein lies the great religious doctrine of Redemption, an experience as real to man as any “natural” fact that he can encounter. That the *highest* concept of God as love is the truest is a judgment that can be rendered only by those who have seen life, and man’s participation in it, within the framework of the towering invention of the idea of God as the highest meaning that can be given to all that we know. Naturalism is discreetly silent here.

It remains to indicate briefly in what ways this hypothesis differs from the ideas that man is either an overdeveloped animal or an underdeveloped god. If he is the former his thinking is instinctual, his feeling is glandular, his willing is reflexive. To apply to these functions moral value is to flatter and falsify them. As an animal, however elaborately complex, he then is no more to be condemned for venery than commended for compassion. He comes nearer to being a demigod than a superanimal by our human standards, and yet such a classification lifts his feet dangerously off the ground. To the degree that he thinks he outranks other animals he tends—and this is important—to think himself superior to moral categories *that he knows do not apply* to animal life. This lively perverseness is at the center of man’s rebellion. He is even likely to convince himself that his emancipation from the moral order is as absolute as he thinks his superiority to the animals is. If he regards himself as a glorified animal he will indulge in self-pity because he cannot escape his animality; if he regards himself as a demigod he will overindulge his sense of importance and, sooner or later,



challenge the status of God by assuming himself to be divine. In either direction—the direction of pure nature, or the direction of a qualified supernature—there is danger for man's selfhood.

His safety—if there is such a thing—lies in his understanding of himself within the framework of the hypothesis of God. Here he can know himself for what he is—an order of creation uniquely and responsibly endowed for purposes which, while they are beyond himself, he can dimly see and in which he can participate. This is mediated to him, by the seers and sages of all theistic religion and by the cohesive and creative experiences of community. In the Christian tradition this is called the Kingdom of God, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and to us it has been revealed in the living witness of the man Jesus Christ.

## Chapter V

### God and the Family

THIS man-creature we have been thinking about, endowed uniquely with a physical organism elaborately complex and a mind—however understood—as puzzling to himself as to his fellows; why is he unable to contrive for himself a perfect order and hold himself to it? The ancient Genesis *mythos* to which we constantly return for the depth it supplies to our too often superficial judgments about ourselves, says he was given dominion over everything in the created order, everything that could swim, fly, and crawl; everything that flowered and fructified; everything indeed but himself. It is, we think, more than a casual omission that leaves out this area of dominion while plotting the others. It is another indication of the depths to which this early insight reached in its probings into the problem of man in the cosmos. And what it brings to the surface is the most ancient and most irreconcilable of paradoxes: man is free and man is fettered. This is true of his essential nature; it is no conflict between his self and the rest of the universe though in his effort to escape the paradox he puts the blame on the world that restricts his freedom. His difficulty is with himself over whom he was not given dominion.

#### [ 1 ]

The problem of freedom is fairly simple to the naturalist. In a closed system of invariable laws governing the behavior of everything, there is no such thing as freedom understood as the capacity or even the inclination to depart from the immutable order. A few substances are found “free” in nature but no action is free. This fact beginning with



the invention of atomism by Democritus which made place only for mechanical causation has been applied by later thinkers as the strict doctrine of Determinism to all the facts and experiences of human history, and to all physical phenomena. It even explains man's mental states which, some psychologists have argued, are no more free than sticks and stones but are determined by physical, social, or psychical causes or conditions. Man's apparent freedom both in the area of action and thought is wholly illusory. Worse than that it is sheer egoism; he says he is free because it is intolerable to think of limitations arbitrarily set upon him. *Why* he thinks it intolerable is not the business of science to ask. He does; and his resentment helps to curtail off from his understanding the causal nexus between event and idea that determines all he thinks and feels. If he could know causes as clearly as he sees events he would discover the simple pattern from which he cannot escape. Whether this would satisfy him is something else again. If one sighs as he contemplates his prison, the determinist would argue that a glandular excitation of one sort induced the reaction. If one exults in his cell, it is simply another gland secreting a different hormone.

To be sure, it is not easy to sustain this somewhat depressing argument even though in certain areas of experience it is definitive. When a nuclear physicist thinks about atoms he is not free to think as he pleases, but he somehow finds he can stop thinking about atoms if he wants to and think about the grocery list his wife gave him. There may be a grim sort of determinism in this domestic chore to which he must yield, but he would say that even on so matter-of-fact an errand he can, if he wants to, and independently of the list's limitations, think about some tulip bulbs he wishes to try out in the garden behind the house. The causal nexus between ideas of one sort and a jump to another sort may exist. There is such a thing as the association of ideas which is often as amusing as inscrutable, but thoughts that one moment are orderly may the next be vagrant and in the transition nothing seems to happen to indicate that a law has either been honored or defied in the change.

The Cartesian idea that the proof of man's being lies in his capacity to think comes as close as we are likely to get to a correctly formalized statement, if, of course, we give to the *capacity to think* all that is

properly subsumed under the activity of the mind—memory, analysis, synthesis, aspiration, fancy, and even feeling. But even here we have a suspicion that there is a factor still unaccounted for: I think, therefore I am. But why do I think? The determinist (naturalist) says: because of the operation of laws. Therefore I am an automaton. Nevertheless we think we can think as we please, we stubbornly reply, and therefore we think we are not automata. The cause of our thinking is in our being, not the reverse, as Descartes put it. *Sum ergo cogito*, we make his famous words say. And the cause of our being takes us back again to the place man occupies in the created order.

This argument shall not be adjourned for a long time. In itself this may be evidence of the uncaused cause of thinking, if the expression can be understood to denote a certain freedom in the exercise of the mind and not random ideation. Let the debate go on; it provides useful exercise for what has been called man's least used muscle.

[ 2 ]

There is, however, an aspect to the problem of freedom that cannot safely be allowed to remain indefinitely unresolved. It is that aspect described by the word *moral*. Here freedom is used as an impetus by which consciously ordered behavior is judged, and in our times it is this that presses upon us from every angle. Moral freedom is generally regarded today as meaning independent or autonomous action. This is held despite the fact that nothing is more obvious than that man *cannot* be independent and *dare not* be autonomous. The ultimate of independence is death; until we achieve that solitary status we are dependent on all that living involves. The nearer we get to independence the closer we are to death. The ultimate autonomy is anarchy or lunacy. He who independently determines the rules and applies them himself—in terms of his personal and social behavior—is a round-the-clock rebel. He who thinks he rules absolutely himself needs to have his head examined.

This is just another way of saying that while freedom is man's most cherished and perhaps most unique endowment, it is far from being unqualified. The paradox is obvious: man is free but not free to be free. The question is what sort of limitation on his freedom will he



willingly accept. Another paradox: man exhibits his freedom on its highest level when he freely accepts the highest restrictions on his freedom. The matter seems to boil down to this question: what will man allow to control him? This, we think, is more immediately practical than the puzzle the epistemologists are working at. The correct answer will, in all likelihood, determine our existence on the planet.

Observe how the concept of independence (or autonomy) as the essence of freedom has fouled things up. The moment one assumes that he is independent or a law unto himself he will feed his egoism by exaggerating his sense of importance in behavior that tends to separate him from his kind. Otherwise his self-regard will atrophy and he will slip back into the herd and into the control of circumstances of one sort or another. But the more important he feels, the less important others become. To maintain his level of self-esteem and independence he must compete with others who are engaged in the same business of self-inflation. His sense of autonomy will resist the efforts of the group to set restraints upon his independency. The result is competitiveness or even combat, and self-justification in terms of self-law.

While it must be allowed that individuality and a sense of personal responsibility are basic to the processes of self-realization, they must not be confused with independence and autonomy. Our fiercely competitive worlds of economics and politics are the result of the latter twin mistakes and our reluctance, personal and social, to accept as beneficent the compendium of corporate experience we call mores and laws tends to keep us isolated, stratified, segregated, regionalized, and more or less hostile.

All of this arises out of our failure to recognize and act realistically on the fact that freedom, instead of being understood as independence and autonomy—which ultimately produce self-destruction for the individual and group that espouse them—must be understood as accommodation to order. If man's dominion over creation in the Genesis *mythos* is unqualified, and his dominion over himself is unmentioned, it must be that man's primary relation to the order of which he is a part depends upon voluntary conformity. Obviously if he

regards that order as belonging to the swimming, flying, and crawling creatures, he will conform or rebel in accordance with his private opinion about these three modes of locomotion. If, on the other hand, he regards that order as belonging uniquely to the genus to which he is psychically and physically allied, he will conform—or co-operate—in terms of his understanding that by such actions his own true freedom is enhanced. This does not lose sight of the fact that freedom is both paradoxical and qualified, and that it keeps before it the fact that freedom is impossible if regarded as identical with independence and autonomy.

The ancient insight of the Hebrew peoples touched this concept at its center. "I shall walk at liberty because I have sought thy precepts" (Psalm 119:45). This is the paradoxical experience of freedom through conformity or, as it is more familiarly put, through obedience. Here the insight of religion converges upon the disciplines of natural science wherein the only freedom possible lies within the limitations of natural laws. The chemist who is free to make sulphanilamide is bound by the formula  $C_6H_8N_2O_2S$ . The moral question, and such it becomes when man makes his choice, is what law or order he will conform to. Here he *is* independent, here he *is* autonomous; not to escape dependence or repudiate law but to choose between such alternatives as are offered. It is the contention of this study that since God is the highest explanation of all that we know, the order of God—called familiarly the Law of God—is the highest order man can choose and within which he will achieve the highest quality and measure of freedom.

This urge for freedom which, we maintain, is a part of his unique created endowment, is exercised unrestingly, sometimes by the processes of nature, sometimes by the processes of thought. Man's birth frees him from suffocation in the womb and his death frees him from the ultimate inutility of disintegration. Within those limits he seeks freedom from hunger by eating, from illness by medication, from loneliness by companionship, from stupidity by education, from sin by redemption, from paucity by fullness, and from surfeit by self-denial. These and all other aspects of his turbulent struggle lead him not into the spurious freedom of independent autonomy but into the pragmatic freedom of obedience to law. His choice is not *whether* he will conform, but *to what order* he will conform. His wisdom will be



gauged by the level of the order he chooses. If he wishes he can cast a horoscope. Some think that represents an order. He may be wiser, however, to consult that grocery list.

[ 3 ]

Freedom, this uniquely created endowment of man, is not achieved either in independence or autonomy. It is had only in terms of community and conformity. We might go further and say that what is inimical to community is wrong. That is a moral deduction from the general propositions we have been discussing. This needs some enlargement and will therefore claim our attention later. Even at the risk of saying it too often we repeat that man's freedom is not exhibited in isolation or self-rule but in community and obedience. On this the natural sciences from physics to sociology are in substantial agreement. Whatever claims the title of freedom outside community and obedience is a perverted or inverted thing and contains within itself the essence of slavery. What, after all, is more despotic than the demand that man live independently or autonomously? What has left greater ruin in its wake than the heavy, awkward stumblings of this misguided, arrogant, and futile understanding of the essence of freedom?

Now it is manifest that the first point at which the freedom of the individual seems to be qualified is in the home, of which, through no exercise of freedom on his own, he becomes a part. Through the violence of parturition he escapes from his womb-prison only to turn up in a mesh of relationships which all but nullify independence and autonomy. To be sure, he is an individual, and he wailingly expresses his resentment at the laws to which he must conform, but if they were suddenly abrogated, he would die. He has no more choice in continuing to accept these relationships—the dependencies he must endure in order to survive and the tyrannies for which food and clothing are his temporary compensation. There will be time enough for him to choose the community of his own liking and the order to which he will give his allegiance. For the interval of physical dependency, however, he is a member of a community, a community within which he is likely to absorb the lessons that will someday teach him the meaning of true freedom, and even help him avoid its perverted and spurious forms. It is therefore important to think of the relation of the family to the invention of faith around which our whole study centers.

What does the family mean? Aristotle said it is composed of a man's possessions and his spouse. This might be thought an unflattering analysis and may have been so intended, though whether Aristotle was speaking, at that point, as a family man, a scientist, or a philosopher, we do not know. To be sure, there is a recognition that a spouse stands in a different category from possessions. That is something. But she may be nothing more than a utility; and that is not much, unless the concept of family be reduced to the practical level of a factory. It is obvious then that the significance that is given to this social entity within which all human individuals have their origin must go beyond Aristotle. It is hardly enough merely to say that the family is a device resulting from social dynamics applied to physical needs. There must be meanings beyond simple descriptions, meanings that may determine the usefulness and the permanence of the social device itself.

## [ 4 ]

We shall summon four witnesses whose expert testimony can help us here. The zoologist is a professional family man in the sense that he has to deal with all living things in terms of the families to which they belong. To him, then, a family is a large—the largest—classification of living things. The order runs: Family, Genera, Species; or, within the Family, the Genus; and within the Genus, the Species. A cat is a member of the family of mammals. Within the mammalian family it is known as feline, and among the felines as Alley, Tabby, Maltese, Manx or what not. By the same sort of classification the human family is of that order of parturient mammals that can be identified as biped (genus), and white, black, brown, yellow, etc. (species). For purposes of classifying man, this is simple, practical, and clear.

The anthropologist is somewhat more ingratiating. He looks at man as an animal and notes his similarities with other creatures and the unique ways he has devised for getting on. His behavior clearly sets him apart, and, within rather generous limits, his actions are predictable. He will, for example, put clothes on—fashioned of fabrics woven of fibers or peeled from a beast (bear or mink!)—if he feels cold or wants to look fancy. Or he will build a fire, sit by it and drink a hot potion he has brewed. Also he is nucleated in little self-help groups (families) be-



cause he cannot make a go of it alone. By a quite baffling sort of co-operative enterprise he will make artifacts, tools, shelters, etc., and finally in a grandiose way talk about the Family of Mankind. It has taken him a long time, however, to develop this oratorical art.

To the anthropologist's invention of the family idea the sociologist adds the observation that man in isolation is physically and spiritually (whatever the latter may mean) no match for his environment. Therefore he creates, instinctively at first, units for protection. Of these the family is the first and simplest: first because of its instinctual base in mating and reproduction; simplest because the offspring of one pair are almost automatically known to one another and share, to a very considerable degree, the same needs. All other social units are increasingly self-conscious extensions of the family system: tribe, clan, nation, and—as above—such agglomerations as unions and federations of the world. He will add that the dominant institutions of a highly organized society are embryonic in the family experience. Here are learned the rudiments of law, economics, religion, education. For this reason the family is a microcosm of the cosmos of human relationships.

The psychologist, reflecting upon the fact of the human family, allows that it is the primary formative influence in the development of the human psyche. Some would say it is the definitive influence. Some, in fact, reduce the whole matter to oral and anal control, something of a specialization of the familial function that is certainly beyond the instinctual behavior of other animal families. The family influence may be haphazard or orderly but it is inescapable. A child growing up outside a family would lack—or fail to develop—certain personality traits, or find a substitute for the family on a lower level of experience that would provide some sort of nurture to it. Thus the experience to be had in the family provides one of the keys that unlocks one of the doors to an understanding of some aspects of human behavior.

Taking the testimony of these four specialists one arrives at a richly informative understanding of what the family is and does. It is a statement made within the dimensions of the faith that it is nature that provides us with the highest meaning that can be given all we know. So, when one is asked about one's family, the answer may be accurately, though perhaps startlingly, put thus: we are Caucasian mammalian bipeds living for a while in an artifact of wood, stone,

and steel, constructed to afford protection from animals and elements. We innocently follow patterns of behavior that appear to have developed from the frictions and felicities of living together. Now that our young, duly yeaned and weaned, have left us, we can see that their personalities were strikingly affected by having lived with a charming and beautiful dam and an extraverted and sometimes irascible sire. It not unfrequently takes them by surprise to be identified by strangers as members of our family, but it is no surprise to us.

This would be an unconventional reply to the casual question but it would be quite accurate by the objective standards of scientific study, and perhaps, on the whole, more honest than some of the answers we make. Zoologist, anthropologist, sociologist, and psychologist would understand and approve, but our neighbors would begin wondering what we had been reading of late.

[ 5 ]

There may be some who think that the *significance* of the family is sufficiently explained by such a description as our four experts have put together, but we are sure many will demur. Not that their analyses are to be set aside as inexact or trivial—far from it; but that they do not reach the highest level of meaning that can be given the family. When, for example, we look at the family as the milieu within which the first limitations are set on the freedom of the individual, and when we remind ourselves that freedom is the unique, created endowment of man, paradoxically to be won by conscious disciplines, we see that there is more to the family than meets the scientific eye. The naturalistic understanding is content to enumerate the factors that characterize and make possible the perpetuation of the human animal. When this process is described and this end guaranteed, the significance of the family—in the view of naturalism—is complete.

Certain facts about the family, however, are not assimilated by naturalism. They lie on a level different from (higher?) the processes and patterns that assure the survival of family, genus, and species. These facts derive from the basic invention as to what the nature of man is thought to be. If a family is a social designation of a small unit in a large zoological category, then it may be nothing more than a pack of wolves, a pod of seals, a covey of quail. The dependent mem-



bers of these subfamilies would be whelps, pups, or chicks. These words supply our neighbors with suggestive similes when they want to complain about our children, but they offer little else.

If we understand man correctly by relating him to the concept of God, and the family by relating it to man, we discover four factors in the human family experience that set it on a level far above that achieved by any other animal group. The first of these is *the sense of belonging to an unsunderable unit*. This is the feeling of kinship. To be sure, this is evident in an arrested form in the lower animals, chiefly in the ferocious instinctive protectiveness of the young by the mother creature. But animal independence comes quickly and separation from the nest, the cave, the burrow, follows soon. Within a very short time the instinct which provided cohesion to the litter is lost, and the young beast "walks by its wild lone," unable to distinguish its litter mate from any other forager. In the human family, however, something happens to the baby, we are told, while it rests, warm, replete, secure at its mother's side. This is not sentimentality; it is solemn fact. Its sense of belonging continues unbroken even after its physical contact with the family is interrupted. The mother who bids farewell to her son leaving home to make his way in the world, and tells him that no matter what happens to him he can always come home, is not maudlinly maternal. She says what no lower animal could say even if it could speak and weep a trifle. Put in another way, this is the experience of love within the family circle. The deep meanings of sex are also to be discovered here, and they are both of a quality that is out of reach of the creature world described by naturalism.

The second factor that gives unique significance to the human family is *the experience of learning to talk*. This is possible only within the family or in what is adopted as its substitute. Those who have observed the first successful effort of the child to communicate with words (and who of us has not?) need not be reminded of the excitement it causes both to the child and to the parent. And yet its significance does not lie in its excitement. There are wordless and voiceless ways of communicating between animals, human and subhuman. It is even possible to say that language is not necessary to human development on the lower levels, though more or less clumsy substitutes for

words will be devised almost in spite of oneself. The significance of talking lies in its relation to the function of thinking. Words are symbols for ideas; no verbal symbols (or a substitute for them), no ideas. Therefore incoherent or disorderly speech is proof of an incoherent or disorderly idea—or mind. Since the development of personality is largely a matter of skill in thinking, thinking is largely a matter of skill in using words. Not as a stunt, as one juggles bright balls, but in putting them together so that they pass an idea along with maximum clarity and minimum fuss. There is nothing like this in purely animal experience though communication is observable in many quaint and amusing ways. When one's dog speaks to his master with his tail he doubtless is expressing something, but how often we have wished that behind the wistful eyes of Shadow, our black cocker, there were verbal resources that would help us understand what he was trying to say.

We add then to the fact of love as a determinative experience introduced by the family, the fact of thinking, similarly introduced. These two elements, thinking and love, we have said, are the essence of the human spirit, providing as they do the rational and emotional-moral components which lift the human species to a level distinct though not discontinuous from the lesser creatures. There is another determinative factor found only with the family in which nestles in embryo the threefold basis of social discipline: *the family is the first school, the first court, the first market*. Or, to put it another way, here the human personality confronts three basic orders: the order of disciplined thought, the order of law, and the order of ownership and exchange. The importance of this can hardly be overestimated for as the growing human animal responds to these three areas of experience in an elementary way, he sets the pattern of his response to the larger social paradigms that are the extension of school, court, and market within which, as an adult, his social experience falls. In response to these there is developed what is called *behavior* or, more specifically, *conduct*, and herein lies both the nucleus and the realization of what we know loosely—and perhaps vaguely—as conscience.

Perhaps to school, court, and market, the altar should be added. The reason for omitting it in this analysis is not that the experience of religion is not first encountered in the home. On the contrary. But religion is an aspect of the school experience, rather than different from



it. It imparts, we think, a most needed element to the three basic disciplines and without it, school, court, and market can become undirected, or worse. At this point we need to indicate what is equally true of *love* and *thought* as discussed above, that so far as we know, nature, on the levels beneath the human, does not have this ground of conduct in the cave, the burrow, or the nest. Learning there is, and discipline, but nothing comparable to the complexity and the significance of what happens in the human home. So to the experience of love and thinking, we add the ground of orderly conduct with its correlative moral experience, *conscience*.

There is one more factor found nowhere except in the family. It is what supplies and sustains *the nexus by which cultural continuity is possible*. Animals seem to pass along reflexive and instinctive responses to their young and this makes possible that quick learning without which life would be forfeited to a stronger enemy. But by this process there is no language, no record, no reputation, no art, no plan, no idealism, no vision passed on, to which new advances and refinements may be added. *Felis leo*, king of beasts, cares nothing for his regal prerogatives, nor is he ambitious that his royal offspring shall advance the distinction and wealth of the reigning family by propitious alliances with other royalty. Social evolution on the human level depends solely on the fact that the family is the nexus of culture. Allow, for two generations, the family to be deleted from the social process, and culture would disappear. This is another way of saying that the family is the nucleus of community as community is the repository and incubator of culture.

[ 6 ]

Here then are four factors unique in the human family which determine almost exclusively the nature and behavior of the psyche. They are on a higher level than the creature nuclei and they comprise: the experience of love, of thought, of moral conscience, and of community—continuity. Nowhere else in nature are such phenomena observable. It is necessary for us to ask whether the faith of naturalism is high enough to correctly establish the significance of family in these terms, or whether the higher faith of God gives us more complete and competent judgment as to the family's meaning.

Before dealing with that question it is interesting to relate these four factors to the nature of freedom with which this chapter began its discussion. It was said that freedom is not independence or autonomy; it is what comes about when one voluntarily yields to a higher order than that of mere inclination, instinct, or pride. The highest experience of freedom comes when one has conceded one's will to the highest. To the Christian testimony this is familiar. The paradox of freedom is resolved when one is willingly committed to the will of God.

Do we not see this paradox both delineated and resolved in the experience and pattern of the human family? Note the singular circumstance by which the family (home) grants the initial experience of animal freedom while closing about it the limitations against which the young child instinctively rebels. Here independence and autonomy are neither salutary nor possible. Only by participation in the order of the family does the child grow in the experience of freedom. When this is consciously understood as familial love, there is a new dimension of freedom discovered, and when, within due time, the experience of sexual love is encountered, freedom finds its fulfillment, not in independence from the beloved, but in yielding. Much the same is to be said concerning the circumstance by which language both sets the psyche free and at the same time holds it in bondage to itself. How helpless (dependent, unfree) one feels where one cannot use the verbal symbols needed to communicate with those with whom one is surrounded. To be unfamiliar with an alien tongue is to be worse than simply dumb; it is to feel altogether the prisoner of a situation from which even the cleverest of gesticulations can only partially find exit. And yet, even within the familiar language of one's native heath, there is not freedom. The most eloquent must leave much unsaid because words are inadequate. The free flight of words never goes far without finding itself imprisoned in mute and incommunicable silence. Such freedom as language allows to thought is conditional and partial, and yet language, for all this, is that without which we are the prisoners of instinct, unfree to think.

Similarly also the relation of growing freedom through the acceptance—reluctantly, to be sure at first—of the disciplines we have described as the school, the court, the market. Learning is one of the



directions one takes in order to be free and the family provides its first lessons. Obeying the rules is another direction one takes toward freedom. For a while the miniature family court must impose its sentence and its penalty but only in order to serve the ultimate end of freedom which comes when one elects to order one's life by a higher law than that in the family. And what of the free market? Here the sense of ownership, barter, bargain, etc., appear in embryo but they are not, for that matter, orderless. One learns the business of business very young and "free" enterprise finally reveals itself as a highly qualified sort of thing, even though the older we grow we seem to claim for it absolute unrestraints.

Finally the chain of circumstance that gives us, within the human family, the freedom to pass along the cultural nexus exhibits the ambiguous nature of freedom. Here again we are not free to pass on or not to pass on the inheritance that is ours. Physically it is in our chromosomes, spiritually it is in our attitudes, intellectually it is in our patterns of speech and thought. But we do not resent being caught in this cultural nexus, this community of growing extension, this moral, aesthetic, rational, continuum within which, by our own choosing of higher and higher orders of living, we move to higher and higher levels of freedom.

[ 7 ]

It remains to relate this to the claim that the human family is given its proper significance within the framework of faith that sees God as the highest meaning of all that we know. We know the family; is it given higher significance when understood in terms of God? What difference does God make?

It has already been pointed out that our concept of God involves all-inclusiveness, order, cohesion, self-conscious loving purpose. When we approach the family from this standpoint we arrive at positions somewhat different from—we say higher than—that provided by naturalism. From a purely naturalistic analysis of the family, however rich and convincing it is in many of its generalizations, one is not likely to deduce the faith that sees love, understanding, moral conscience, and community as the determinative factors in the family as it impinges on the psyche. On the high level of theistic faith natural-

istic categories give way to higher ones. The biped mammal becomes a man and the man becomes a son of God. The litter becomes a school for developing love, thought, conscience, community, and the distinctive human capacity for freedom. The herd becomes the community by which the acquired beauty, goodness, and truth of its culture are passed on to succeeding generations. Here is something that includes more than physical nature per se seems to know, that coheres in an order that is productive of the highest experiences men have known, and a purpose that reaches far beyond the aim of nature, viz., the perpetuation of family, genera, and species. The aim of the family, as understood within the purpose of God, is the creation and perfection of the Sons of God in the Blessed Community.

It is this titan faith that has been transmitted to our times through the Hebrew-Christian tradition. How deeply searching was the idea of family in the ancient faith of Israel—the family of Abram through which all the families of the earth were to be blessed, the family which had its name given by its Eternal Parent (Ephesians 3:15) and was as wide as humanity itself.

This idea is more than sentiment, or parochialism, or *amour propre*. It is faith. An odd faith in our times perhaps, but what appalling prospects lurk in a lower faith. Some animals hunt in packs; modern nations hunt in pacts. The broken family of humankind is afraid. From whence are love, wisdom, conscience, continuity, to come today? Not surely in the fragmenting of the world into low-level and limited families born, not of faith, but of fear. Do these not promise us instead of love, hate; instead of rational thinking, festering, irrational prejudices; instead of conscience, moral opacity; instead of a continuing community, chaos? And what of freedom, misconceived as independence and autonomy, and misbegotten as self-pride?



## *Chapter VI*

### God and Society

OUR attention has been given to the problem of man primarily, or perhaps it should be more accurately said, centrally. Whether justified or not, whether disputed by some nonhuman creature with a superior faculty for judgment hitherto undiscovered by scientific investigation, man claims he is the center of the created cosmos, set in a median position between the infinitely vast and the infinitesimally small, between the animals of his acquaintance and the divinity that shapes his ends. From this stance he looks at nature and at God, at history and at himself. In the last chapter he studied himself as a member of a natural physical nucleus called the family which affects his personality in profound if not indeed in definitive ways, ways which prepare and condition him for membership first in a social community and finally in a spiritual community within which the highest realization of his own potentialities—and that of his fellows—is possible. This family is his only social milieu for a while. Within a short time, however, that nucleus is broken open by the bombardment of particles from similar nuclei and there is a release of power that to the psyche is as fateful as the fission of an atom. It is soon evident that he has to come to terms with a larger area of contacts, all of which profoundly affect him, though not perhaps so deeply as his family. There is established, by this fact, the interesting and often painful dilemma every man faces in this process: How preserve his integrity as an individual within the disintegrative forces of society? It is the ancient question of man versus men.

## [ 1 ]

The interest of the natural sciences in society in general is, in the nature of the case, limited. Physics and chemistry and their variously combined new disciplines accept the social environment that man makes and accepts, but the analysis of it is left to the social sciences. Obviously if one has a faith about the nature and meaning of social relations it is not to be found in an invention concerning a time-space continuum of four dimensions, however inevitable such a faith seems for understanding radioactive phenomena. Conversely if one is to have a faith about society it must be pitched on levels that are as high for itself as the inventions of physics are definitive for electromagnetism. It is the heart of this study that the hypothesis of God supplies the highest meaning to all that we know of purely physical phenomena, and it would surely follow that our resolve to give the highest possible meaning to social phenomena, would lead us to the same invention. God is all-inclusive, we have been saying. That there is in Him a sundering of physical and social phenomena is not acceptable to our thesis. It is pertinent then to look at society in a range of relations more extended than the embryo family society, though not more deep.

✓ The family, it has been pointed out, contains in rudiment three vital factors of discipline: the school, the court, the market. This is true to a greater or lesser degree of all cultures, since not to learn, not to have rules, not to own and exchange property is not to have culture. Our approach up to this point has been to study man through nature and the first intimation of his social connections in the natural social unit, the family. From this point it is possible to move into the more spacious context of society in general, though our preoccupation will of necessity be with Western society. And it is our concern to indicate as far as possible the ways in which the hypothesis of God provides both explanation and guidance to the understanding of that society. For surely in this area, the qualities of all-inclusiveness, cohesion, purpose, are as necessary in themselves, and as necessary to be understood, as anywhere else. We believe, in short, that religious faith makes the greatest possible difference to society in general, not as a component, but as a determinant.

The origins of societies are not our present concern. If Toynbee's



notion is correct they come about through challenge and response. It may be that the necessity for survival in the Nile Valley led to the draining of the marshes along the river, and the creation of the new land made possible the development of a society and ultimately of a highly complex culture. Other challenges at other places and times invited other responses and produced other cultures. Thus, we are told, twenty-one cultures have appeared during the last 6,000 years of man's approximately 300,000 years as a physically distinct genus. This is a broad concept of society. A more narrowed understanding is possible—say, for example, the concreted social entity of a modern city, or town. Here again it is not difficult to interpret the history and pattern of the group in terms of challenge and response. Indeed, pressing these dialectical forces back to the isolated experience of the individual, it is often helpful to understand one's personal development and design in terms of their perpetual tension.

Societies, like individuals, shake down into patterns that become more and more immutable, and there are stratifications of wealth, learning, jobs, skills, etc. that are as clearly divided by social attitudes as by railroad tracks. They are not, however, unalterable. The tracks are crossed, and the unschooled parents see their children become successful professionals across town. This is possible where there is a vital faith which gives meaning to society. Where that faith reposes in a low estimate of the components of society, change is sluggish and limited; in a society with a high faith, change may be accelerated and radical. Obviously this is true also of the individual member of the group.

[ 2 ]

What we call Western culture, or civilization, or society is a phenomenon of history that has shape, significance, and destiny. The faith that activates it may be its most important element, hidden perhaps but powerful in the vigor and constancy with which response meets challenge. Our historic lineage is as familiar as it is simple. Since about 1500 B.C. it has been developing a compendium of three basic factors: the scientific and reflective disciplines of the Greeks (include also art), the ethical and theonomic sensitivity of the Hebrews, and the legalistic and administrative skill of the Romans. This oversimplifies

what is of course a very complex development, but we can see, with some degree of objectivity and modesty, the outlines of a culture that is characterized, in general, by intellectual, artistic, and philosophical vitality, ethical idealism and concern, and a rational political order. In none of these three respects has our culture remained static, nor has it always produced in individuals the behavior that the all-over pattern would seem to promise. Because of the dialectical challenge and response there have been fluctuations of energy and fatigue, idealism and loss of nerve, but the composite pattern is more or less discernible all along the historic line.

It is customary to sharpen the description somewhat as we speak of society nowadays. We are, we say, a Christian, democratic, capitalist culture. The order is significant. The Hebrew-Christian ethical and monotheistic tradition is the matrix of the democratic tradition; and out of democracy, capitalism was born. Democracy, that is to say, was a resolution of the dilemma of private and social freedom in terms of an idea of man that was Christian in its orientation, though as we have seen, the secularization of this Christian idea of freedom has resulted in its modern perversion into the false ideas of independence and autonomy. We need to say again that man is free in terms only of his voluntary bondage to God and that he expresses his freedom ultimately within the community of the children of God. Out of this tradition, democracy was born.

Out of the Christian tradition emerged also the capitalist economic order. Here again it is impossible to dissociate economics from one's idea of what man is, and from this point of view economics is based on metaphysics or, to be more specific, in theology. How a man regards his property—whether a thing or a skill—and how he regards his fellow man, determine his behavior in the production and exchange of goods. If his neighbor is a rival to be outwitted, a friend to be aided, or a master to be served, he will be treated in those terms, and we will have an economic society characterized by competition in the first instance, by co-operation in the second, and by slavery in the third. All three of these variants are to be observed within our Christian democratic culture, but the origin of capitalism must be found in the realization that there was a quality of equality among men that gave them the inherent right to use their skills and their goods in ways that would



augment their own sense of dignity and well-being, rather than the wealth and indolence of a feudal lord. No measure of aberration from that primary realization can cancel it out as the determinative impetus of the capitalist order.

We are likely to make claims for the excellencies of this Christian, democratic, capitalist way of life that are not shared by those who are members of neighbor cultures. They have something to say for themselves and not a little to say in disparagement of us. And it is easy to dismiss their criticisms as the defensive attitude of those who are living in dying cultures, and whose only clear evidence of a still lingering ember of vitality is their wish to become like us by assimilating our spirit and appropriating our skills. We are not slow to abet this feeble glow by our hearty good will for the extension of democracy and capitalism all over the world. Christianity too, of course, but if the extension of the former two involves the diminution or dilution of the third, we must still go on democratizing and capitalizing the earth if we have to go to war and destroy the race in order to do it. It is to such an oddly contradictory position that an acceptance of democracy or capitalism as our faith—as the highest explanation of all that we know—has led us. This is, of course, the essence of secularism. Such a faith is true from the secularist viewpoint, a position in this context analogous to the naturalistic view in the field of science. It claims for our culture the perfection of all social perfections since we have produced the highest (note the word) standard of living. Here living, unhappily, is a matter of creature comforts, a sort of animal contentment or excitement as the case may be, living understood within the framework of a low faith in the importance of things as the best explanation of all that we know. This may be moralizing; so be it. The fact remains that the most persistently made claim for the superiority of our culture over all past and contemporary rivals is in terms of a higher standard of living and of the physical power represented by our wealth and industrial ingenuity and productivity.

That is what we are; and we have reasons with which we prove to ourselves that we are not only the superior culture of all history up to the present, but that we are the ultimate culture, that the destiny of the cosmic processes is fulfilled in us. There can arise no culture greater than ours; such progress as is to mark man's earthly pilgrimage from

here out will indubitably be within the Christian, democratic, capitalist order of the West. Those who dare to call this a delusion are ignored as pessimists, those who call it the sin of pride are despised as prigs. One need make no defense of pessimism or priggery in this connection. It may be sufficient for those concerned both with the character and chances of our culture to be reminded that no little of our boasting may be due to a gnawing sense of insecurity, and that along with high standards of living and power we have a high concentration of fear and hypertension.

## [ 3 ]

There is another fact about society in general that needs noting. Social institutions are the identifying marks of a culture. Thus the institutions of Christianity, of democracy, and of capitalism distinguish us. But institutions are the end product of the dynamics of social change. First in order comes an experience. This creates an idea about itself, and the idea soon becomes a doctrine. And then a dogma. Finally an institution is created to shelter and protect the dogma. We can discern in all three of the components of our culture this development from experience to institution. By the time it has reached the institution stage it has made place for the activities of the pundits who endlessly rationalize the dogma, and the police who protect the institution. The priests of religion are no more devoted than the priests of democracy or capitalism, nor are they more confident of the impregnability of the cathedral than their opposite numbers in the Houses of Commons and Stock Exchanges.

There is nothing sinister in this but there is a circumstance that tends toward the devitalization of the process the further it gets away from the original experience from which it emerged. There would seem to be a social law that says the power of an institution is in inverse ratio to its distance from its primary experience. Thus an institution can be so concerned with preserving itself that it loses or falsifies the experience. This is the danger of vested interests in religion, government, and economic affairs. It is no truer to say of religion that its giant concentrations of ecclesiastical power stifle the simple individual religious experience, than that the institutions of monopoly capitalism destroy the life of small business where the possession, production, and



exchange of goods is fairly near the level of simple individual experience. And when in the name of democracy, its high priests can deny democratic rights to individuals in order that the institution may be preserved, the nether point of political sophistry is reached.

It should be apparent, then, that society is to be kept vital by a constant rejuvenation of its experiential matrices. In the case of religion, it may be necessary to see the institution as the enemy of religious experience and by breaking it open create new experience. This is the sociological significance of the Reformation. Similarly democracy needs constant re-examination; and there is no economic order that can claim exemption from the same attention. Of course, the basis upon which such re-examinations are conducted may be various. The institutions of religion may be scrutinized by the agents of government lest they invade and threaten the institutions of the state. The G-men of the economic institutions may lay under the microscope their suspicions about what governmental and religious institutions—or perhaps fresh and creative experiences—are up to. Moreover, the focus of such critical concern may rest on any one of the steps in the process from experience to institution. The experience, the idea, the doctrine, the dogma, and the institution are all subject to frequent appraisal in a culture that is not already moribund. It is, indeed, the sign of cultural death when such critical study has disappeared; it is conversely the promise of life when it is constant, determined, and free.

It is our contention that the criticism of a culture can have meaning only in terms of the faith that activates it. From the level of a low faith—say the purely naturalistic—a culture is not to be understood in terms of progress from experience to institution, nor will one be expected to feel sufficient compunction, whether moral, political, or fiscal, to shatter institutions to the end that new fecundating experiences can be released. The institution, from such a perspective, is to the human creature what the carapace is to the turtle. Break it and the organism dies; but be sure the turtle would never, for some unturtlish reason, destroy it himself.

There is criticism on what we think is a level higher than the naturalistic. It is the faith of modern secularism. It is easy to account for this puissant faith by pointing to one cause: education, materialism, etc., and yet this is deceptive. Secularism in its roots cannot be dis-

sociated from the experience that also produced free church, free state, and free enterprise. It was, essentially, a facet to the many-sided realization of human dignity that took shape in one of its forms during the Renaissance. If secularism is the dominant faith of Western culture today, it is so because of that social law that evolves institutions out of experiences.

Clearly the most vocative criticism of our culture comes today from the fervent evangelists of this secularist faith known specifically as Marxism. Here is a new order—social, political, economic—that is in open and aggressive revolt against the Christian, democratic, capitalist world. From each of these three components it takes away all historic, rational, and social validity and proposes to put in their place a dialectical materialism, a classless society—achieved ultimately by violence—and the complete absorption by the State of all sources of production, whether they be natural resources or human skills.

This is not the place to examine the validity of this faith. We have said it strikes us as being on a higher level than naturalistic positivism for the reason that it considers that it is a structure built on naturalistic presuppositions but towering above them. Our point here is to indicate that Marxism is a faith; it is a resolve to give the highest possible meaning to all that it knows and with a thoroughness that encompasses everything from epistemology (ideas are matter in motion) to a new theory of genetics that abolishes genes in order to give environment a monopoly in the determination of the species. This may sound fantastic to us but we will do well to realize that the imperatives that compel its fanaticism are the imperatives of a living faith—a *Weltanschauung* against the assaults of which the ramparts of our culture are to stand or fall within the next century.

Nor is it necessary here to review the criticism of Western culture by the Marxists or to refute them where they can be refuted. Least of all can we write them off as irrelevant, erratic, or stupid. We want simply to see that they come from a faith that is, from the Christian perspectives, truncated, partial, limited, and therefore leaves out of consideration certain dynamic facts that are rudimentary to all human experience and to all human societies. These missing elements in the Marxist ideology are supplied by the faith of the Hebrew-Christian tradition. In other words, the God of our tradition gives the highest possible



meaning to all that we know about the dynamics and the results of the social processes we call culture. It is from the altitude of that high faith that Christianity criticizes itself along with democracy and our economic order.

## [ 4 ]

If our faith understands God in terms of all-inclusiveness, cohesion, self-conscious directed purpose and power, any criticism of our culture from that perspective must ask the question: Is Western civilization explained by the four components that provide the basis for our hypothesis of God? While it is not difficult to assess the measure in which our culture is inclusive, cohesive, self-consciously purposive, and dynamic, it is another matter to establish the fact that it is thus because of God. Indeed that is quite beyond the reach of proof, just as we have said the same questions about God cannot be established by analysis, controlled experiment, etc. Exactly for this reason it is an act of faith that provides the criterion by which our judgment on our culture is rendered.

While this difficulty is recognized it is, at the same time, a common-sense judgment that culture of whatever sort *ought* to be inclusive, cohesive, self-consciously purposive, loving, and dynamic. The reason for this is the record that history exposes. Those cultures that have been narrowed in terms of region, race, religion or what not; that have been diffuse, that have been haphazard or random, that have been more or less weak in terms of spiritual and physical vitality, have not survived. It may be plausibly deduced that any culture that today represents in its essential patterns, limitation, looseness, opportunism or improvisation, and spiritual feebleness (for which no physical power can compensate), will not survive. Professor Toynbee has traced this argument through six volumes<sup>1</sup> and in a subsequent study<sup>2</sup> has said that the only way in which Western culture can avert the doom that has already overtaken sixteen cultures is to effect a universal world government, devise an economic order that represents an adjustment between the extremes of communism and capitalism, and restore our culture to the spiritual foundations upon which it was originally estab-

<sup>1</sup> *The Study of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947).

<sup>2</sup> *Civilization on Trial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948).

lished. To do this assumes that there is sufficient spiritual and physical power available; for in the first proposal there is the ideal of inclusiveness, in the second the ideal of an economic unity that is presently impossible with the communist-capitalist stalemate, and in the third the ideal of a self-conscious and purposive development toward which all man's spiritual and physical energies must be directed.

It should be obvious then that the three components of Western culture are to be criticized from the implications of such a faith as we claim represents the highest level of explanation. That component we have called the Christian element must stand judgment in terms of the measure to which it is or seeks to be all-inclusive, cohesive, consciously purposive, loving, and dynamic. There is no little that supports the optimistic claim that Christianity today is just that. There is much, however, that supports the less optimistic fears that it is far from it. There is a nebulous inclusiveness in the easy moralism about the brotherhood of man; there is the hard and realistic relentlessness of Christianity's most numerically important segment that divides the world sharply between Roman Catholics and everybody else. There is a cohesive power that is deeply felt by some who know how the Christian fellowship can really cross national, racial, and cultural barriers; there are, on the other hand, the sometimes frightened and sometimes cynical protests of members and segments of the Christian fellowship to the effect that segregation on racial and even on creedal grounds has bona fide Christian sanctions. Again there is a self-conscious purposiveness in much of the enterprise of the organized life of the church. It is still preponderantly a matter of escaping from the mesh of man's mundane experiences to an extraterrestrial, posthistory fulfillment of the divine intentions. There is, however, an aimlessness, division, competition, and indecision as to the central meaning of individual, group, and cultural destiny that nullifies much effective action. And what shall be said of power? It is a dismal confession to make, but it is true: the factor of explicit, concentrated moral and spiritual power is no longer considered seriously by those who, in the seats of authority, guide the world's precarious progress. The Christian testimony makes little difference in Congress.

If the above can be said from the Christian perspective about the Christian component of our culture, more severe strictures are to be



laid against the other two. A detailed analysis is unnecessary here since the data are available in abundance elsewhere. It is wholesome that democracy has been subject to much scrutiny of late. The easy demand that its Western type be exported to those places on the earth where it has not been known, and the easier assumptions that it is worth exporting and will be eagerly appropriated by the impoverished non-democratic peoples of the earth; and the claim by rival cultures that they and not we are the true exemplars and practitioners of democracy—these matters have been deeply pondered. In almost every case the consensus of self-criticism has been that the only way in which the democratic ideal can be made convincing abroad is by making it convincing at home. This would mean an end to undemocratic practices in the political field and the establishment of them in economic and industrial areas. A distinction was recently made between what he called white and black votes by an aspirant to high political office in a democratic primary. He had forgotten—if he ever knew—that in a democracy there is only one kind of vote—a citizen's vote. A democratic society that is not all-inclusive, cohesive, self-consciously purposive and dynamic will not survive in a contest, either with a society that scorns democracy and seeks to destroy it, or claims a superior brand and undertakes to dispense it.

The criticism of capitalism rests on the same presuppositions. Whatever its origin and its record it is not all-inclusive in its present intentions and its successes. Despite our self-congratulations over our high standard of living, to most individuals and families in our culture these standards mean nothing. Here again the statistical data in support of such statements are monumental and need no reproduction here. Nor do we think that modern monopolistic finance capitalism supplies the cement by which a culture coheres. At no point is the fissure within our culture seen more starkly outlined than in the much-talked-of disparities between the haves and the have-nots. Nor do we believe that capitalism in its modern form has been rationalized convincingly in terms of self-conscious purpose. It has developed and survived by reason of prodigious natural resources either in the Western world or in the undeveloped areas of earth, exploited by Western capital. The threat of depletion and possible exhaustion of these gifts of earth has not resulted in over-all planning but in somewhat frantic improvisa-

tions and seizures of those spots on the earth's surface from which the unctuous black fluid flows or beneath which the radioactive metals hide. Power capitalism has, but there is grave doubt as to whether it is ultimately to be used to stabilize and extend Western culture or destroy it. And what of its love quotient?

## [ 5 ]

Before concerning ourselves with what is the social concept that arises out of, and is inseparable from, the Christian faith, it is helpful to be reminded that the criticisms laid against our Christian, democratic, capitalist culture are justified because of the social law that says the power of a social institution is in inverse ratio to its distance from the experience that gave it birth and growth. Thus one may say, with modest hopefulness, that a return to the experiences that gave Christianity, democracy, and capitalism birth will give promise of rejuvenation. If, however, the hard carapace institutions that have grown upon them are preserved and defended simply as an end in themselves, instead of being the protectors and the creators of new living experiences out of which new ideas, doctrines, dogmas, and institutions may evolve, the predictions implicit in Toynbee's analysis of our culture can hardly fail of fulfillment.

At this point the Christian concept of community enters. Here is an invention that is not synonymous with culture. Let us have a look at the word. It has an interesting family history. The great, great, great, great-grandfather of this word was an Aryan, a member of that prolific family that gave its sturdy ancestry to all of the Indo-European languages. His name was *Mav* which is a Sanskrit word meaning *to bind*. *Mav* had a son, an adventurous lad who, moving westward from the plains of Central Asia, entered the Roman world and became *Mu* in the Latin tongue, without any change of his original meaning. *Mu's* daughter, also called *Mu*, met an irresistible young Latin preposition by the name of *Cum*; and yielding to his plausible wooing, married him, and in proper season *Cum-mu* became the parents of a lively brood whose name meant *to bind together*. One of the stout sons of *Commu* (for thus they soon came to be called) was *Communio*, so named because he meant *to strengthen*. In dangerous times he was



taken to mean *to fortify*, and in his chromosomes, to be passed on to his descendants, was fixed this fine hereditary strain: *to bind together in order to strengthen*. *Communio* was the great-grandparent of *Community* and was the father of a daughter (an adjective, to be grammatically exact, but since an adjective modifies a noun it may be properly regarded as feminine) named *Communis*, and she meant *shared by all*, which when she gathered up all the meanings of her forebears, gave to the ancient line of *Mav* the then contemporary idea: *united to strengthen for the benefit of all*. Now *Communis* became the mother of *Communitas* who in time bore an English child—*Community*. Long before this propitious birth, Cicero had given *Communitas* currency and said she meant *fellowship*. So if we try to bring together all the hereditary lines that began with great, great, great-grandfather *Mav* in Central Asia, we discover that by lineage alone our word *Community* means: *That which is bound together in a strong (fortified) fellowship for the benefit of all*.

Of course this might be a definition of any society or civilization. Certainly it is the essence of corporate life and its hope. And yet when we speak of community from the Christian perspective we are not using a word that is cognate to culture. Civilizations or cultures, viewed from the naturalistic level, are fortuitous. The original impetus that coagulated and activated them was a phenomenon of nature to which man responded.<sup>3</sup> Such patterns and ideals as emerged were a development that was not foreseen in the beginning. Nor, we are led to believe, was there a general pervasion throughout all the members of the group, of the meaning of what was going on. The creative minority (Toynbee's phrase) was responsible for the invention of idea, artifact, and social practice. When they helped to meet the original challenge or its later derivatives, the society grew and the outlines of the true culture became clear.

<sup>3</sup> On July 18, 1950, UNESCO issued a "Statement on Race." Dr. Montagu, in the *Saturday Review of Literature* (August 6, 1950) described the way the statement came about, and said: "The consequences (of which) are of truly universal importance." Article Sixteen, which closes the statement, says: "Lastly, biological studies lend support to the ethic of universal brotherhood; for man is born with drives toward cooperation, and unless these drives are satisfied man and nations alike fall ill. Man is born a social being who can reach his fullest development only through interaction with his fellows. The denial at any point of this social bond between man and man brings with it disintegration. In this sense, every man is his brother's keeper. . . ."

The community as understood within the framework of the Christian faith is not thus. The element of fortuity is displaced by design. The bond that unites its members is not a natural phenomenon so much as a spiritual one; it is not a flood, a morass, a glacial invasion so much as a moral and spiritual need; it is not a cataclysm that men must unite to resist: it is sin that men must unite to redeem. This is the language of religion, pure and simple, and for the reason that community—within the orbit of Christian faith—is a religious invention. When it is said to be integrated rather than segregated, and bound together (voluntarily) for the good of all, it is simply being given a generalized description that has come out of experience.

This is, to be sure, an ideal construct and yet it has had actual existence in small religious societies in many different cultures. It seems that the first Christian fellowship started out to be just such a community (cf. Acts 4:32-37) patterning itself perhaps on communities of other religious orientations in the world of that time. What happened to interrupt the first *Communitas* we do not know, but the idea and the effort have never wholly fallen out of sight. The hope of it animates every effort to create a universal world order even though political and economic causes seem more obviously operative, and common enemies drive us to a common shelter more quickly than a realization of common human folly and sin.

Enough has been said to set the idea of society, or culture, or civilization within the context of religious faith. Therein, and on its terms culture becomes community, a concept that is not only higher than any civilization yet seen but, because it finds its explanation in the all-inclusive, cohesive, self-consciously purposive, loving power of the Divine is the highest of which man can conceive.

It is unnecessary to point out how community in its Christian invention is all-inclusive, how its total life is cohesive, vitally creative, consciously purposive and loving. Nor need one indicate how fragile the bonds that hold it together become, or how vulnerable it is to the destructive forces that bombard all life forms—social and individual. These are not imperfections in the ideal but in those who bind themselves together strongly for the benefit of all, and it is one element of their strength that they are aware of their proneness to failure and



seek freedom from themselves in the composite freedom of the total life of community.

If this seems remote from the relative simplicities of the study of the rise and fall of civilizations it is perhaps due to the fact that God is higher than man, and that the community of the Sons of God is higher than man's most ornate and perishable culture. Withal it cannot be dismissed as chimerical. On the contrary, those who find themselves within it, are most certain that it is the ultimate in fellowship as it also somehow is the destiny of man in bonds with his fellows.

## Chapter VII

### God and Government

OUR previous chapter led us through a somewhat generalized discussion of the relation between religion and our society, taking the latter as a trinity of components and laying it alongside the concept of community which, we said, represents a credible projection of God as related to culture in general. *Society* was used in a broad way as synonymous with culture and civilization, and *community* was used as an invention within which all societies, cultures, civilizations must, under the aegis of faith (a faith, whether ordinary or elevated), ultimately be subsumed as a matter of prudence if for no other reason. It is obvious, however, that societies are under control, or controls of various sorts. The agent of the community, whether the community be as complex as a modern city or as simple as a primitive tribe, is not always the same. It may reside in a body of law, and this corpus may be common or statutory, as casual as a consensus or as rigorous as a code. It may reside in an individual whose exercise of authority may be as reckless as a despot's or as benevolent as a father's. It may reside in an institution of religion. Here again we can have simplicity or complexity, a witch doctor or a pontiff, making use, for the purposes of control, of a fetish vested with absurd magical potencies, or an assumption of title supported by ritual of eye-catching magnificence.

[ 1 ]

It is not within the necessities of our study to describe the way in which the nuclei of social control have come about. That is the busi-



ness of the political scientist and his colleagues in allied or collateral studies. We have been asking the question whether, and to what degree, religious faith, or more specifically, faith in God, affects the dynamic experiences of man, both as an individual and in groups. Faith, we repeat, is the resolve to give the highest possible meaning to all that we know; and Christian faith finds that meaning in God. It should be important to know how it is related to these co-ordinates of control which exist alongside each other and to a greater or less degree commingle their interests and authorities. Man as an animal lives within a natural order and is subject to its control; man as a social being lives within a society and is subject to its pressures. The natural laws that affect him as an animal are compounded by social habits, mores, and laws that determine his moral, spiritual, and legal relations to his group. He intuitively has something that may vaguely resemble faith in all these factors. Does a consciously projected faith make any difference? Because we believe what kind of faith a man has makes an all-important difference, a difference which at this moment may be set down in terms of actual physical survival or destruction, we shall study in this and the following two chapters, God and the legal State, and God and the Church, and God and the Market. These are three concentrations of control. What we think of them in terms of the highest invention of our faith is crucial.

## [ 2 ]

The legal State is a construct based on a society that is nucleated around law. Its faith, to put it in the language of our study, is that law gives the highest possible meaning to the State. This is true whether it be put in the absurd egotism of Louis XIV's famous claim: "The State; it is I"; or in the more recondite definition of Hobbes who regarded the State, or as he put it more euphemistically, the commonwealth, as "one person for whose acts a great multitude by mutual covenants, one with another, have made themselves every one the author, to the end that he may use the means and strength of them all as he shall think expedient for their peace and common defence"; or in the extended dissertation of Rousseau's "Social Contract."

But the State is more than a legal entity. Since it is the agent of control, it is government. Only in Elysium will a social contract pro-

vide for undirected behavior. So long as we are this side of Utopia, we will have to be governed, and our concern will be to have government as good as possible. Whether it is good or bad is to be determined ideally by the measure it—the governing power—seeks its own advantage or the advantage of the whole State.

Aristotle had something to say about this. He divided government according to two principles: whether it was concentrated in the hands of one man, a few men, or many men; and whether it acted in terms of the advantage of the governed or the governing. Hence there are six varieties of government, three good and three bad, the bad form being a depraved form of the good. Monarchy, he said, is the good government of one; tyranny is its depraved form. Aristocracy is the good government of the few; oligarchy is its evil form. Commonwealth is the good government of the many; democracy is its depraved form. We wince at his characterization of democracy, and from perspectives considerably different from his do not allow his claim that no one of these depraved forms is better or worse than any other, to go unchallenged. We do not agree that tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy are equally bad. He was, as a matter of fact, hardly as rigorous as this seems to make him. His more congenial comment in another connection to the effect that democracy is *the least bad* of the depraved forms sounds slightly better. In general he appears to have thought that good government is one in which as little as possible is left to the will or whim of the governor (one, few, or many) and as much as possible is left to the established law. This suggests the Jeffersonian dictum that that government is best that governs least. The kinship of Aristotle and Jefferson in this connection is also indicated by Aristotle's belief that democracy is at its best when the community is predominantly an agrarian one in which, since there is little leisure for political affairs, the law is allowed to rule without the interpretations or embellishments of whittlers or cracker-barrel philosophers. Conversely, he held that democracy is at its worst when the larger citizen class has leisure enough to make a business of politics.

We are not disposed to argue these points here since they are, as we have said, the stock-in-dispute among political scientists. From the central focus of our present study our concern deals rather with the intention and the methods of the laws the State employs—no matter



whether it be monarchy, aristocracy, or commonwealth. It is with this that religious faith is concerned as it addresses itself to the State, for the intention of law is a matter of faith as the methods of law are a matter of morality.

## [ 3 ]

There is a legitimate criticism of any attempt to consider government solely from the standpoint of faith and morals. It says the primary concern of law is not goodness but order. At this point, we are reminded, Church and State come into conflict unless their twin authorities coalesce or one is captured by the other. Hence the United States Constitution's doctrine of the separation of Church and State. At the same time, while recognizing the difficulties in this approach, it need not make us diffident about bringing to bear the influence of vital religious faith on the intentions and the methods of government. Governments and their laws do not arise out of, or operate within, a moral vacuum. If Aristotle thought democracy was the least bad of the depraved forms of government (benevolent monarchy being the best), he was passing a value judgment, almost, one might say, a moral judgment on it. And one whose moral standards derive from his faith (whatever it be) cannot escape regarding the controls of society in quasi-moral if not in transcendent moral terms.

What is the highest meaning that government as such can assign to itself? The origin of the word is instructive. *Kybernao* means to guide a ship and the governor is the skipper who posts the watch at the prow and shouts orders to the helmsman. The figure of speech is preserved. We still speak of the Ship of State, and Walt Whitman in a famous poem lamented the death of Lincoln as the loss of the captain, not of a military company but of a vessel buffeted by mighty storms. Even beyond these familiar usages the word has precise connotations. A ship moves over waters that are uncharted. Between the lookout and the horizon there is the waste of the monotonous sea. To the carefree passenger it may appear endlessly fascinating, but to the skipper the emerald distances reveal no fixed marks to guide him. His compass points are the stars. They are immutably set. When he can see them he is sure of direction and the port ahead.

To be sure, there is nothing morally relevant in the relation between

the fixed stars and the mariner's course. They are simply an order by which he can steer his ship. If he chooses to ignore them he may; if he cannot see them he will trust to luck. In the former case his passengers will hold him culpable if they come upon ill-fortune; in the latter case they will share his confusion while it lasts. But the order of the stars is there. It is unimportant to ask whether it is good or bad; it is necessary, in order to get to port, to follow it.

This is another way of saying that the highest meaning government can assign to itself is order. Not moral order; simply order. Society must be led if it is not going to stagnate or granulate or run wild. To avoid being a mob, a group must be regulated by established laws. Each member of the group is compelled, in the interests of one another and the group as a whole, to conform to the law—the order—even if in doing so he has to modify or even deny his own inner intentions.

The meaning—and aim—of government being order, its instrument is the law. In the figure of the skipper at the tiller, the tiller is the law by which the order of the stars is followed. Unhappily for society the law is not ready-made like the bright patterns in the night sky. Social laws are arrived at by social experience. They are the result less of reason than of the impingement of social dynamics on group practices. The late Justice Holmes said: "The life of the law has not been logic: it has been experience." Are we not to understand that the law given on Mt. Sinai was simply the codification of the experience of generations of social growth given divine sanction by the portents that accompanied its formulation? Man discovered that theft, murder, adultery, lying, unfiliality, etc., were intolerable within a group that was determined to achieve and maintain social solidarity. This authentication is for us a common-sense matter today. We need no cloud of fire over a mountain to convince us of the social utility of these ancient wilderness proscriptions. Just as scientific laws are the discovery of the way things behave, social laws are the discovery of the way people ought to (or must) behave for the maximum of social integration. It is in this way that all law—the instrument of order—has come about. This is as true of canon law as it is of common, statutory, or civil law.

The meaning of government is order and the instrument of order is law. Is there a point beyond this that we need to go? We think so. It is represented by what we regard the ideal of government to be.



Certainly within the perspectives of our culture the answer is easy: it is justice. How close the idea of justice is to law is indicated by the fact that the Latin word for law (*ius*) is the root of our word *justice*. It does not surprise us that this ancient root has put forth so splendid a flower, so splendid indeed that the idealism of utopian society rarely outmatches it. To render what is due or merited, to requite, to require, to reward, what is more lofty than this? That it is far beyond the achievements of our race at any point or time is so manifest that we tend to establish it as the *ne plus ultra* of social accomplishment. This—justice to all under law—is not only the majestic motto above the austere entrance to the palace that houses the United States Supreme Court—it is the dream, alike of the hapless and the fortunate, of the evil and the good everywhere. If this is the faith of government is it not the highest possible meaning that can be given to society?

It is in no attempt to derogate the ideal of *justice under law producing order* that we proceed to point out that it is not high enough. To say that it is the ideal of paganism is simply a matter of fact. If the word seems too censorious we need to be reminded that we owe an enormous debt of wisdom and idealism to those properly classified as pagans. That it is the ideal of modern secularist society may or may not, according to our presuppositions, disparage it. Our criticism of the ideal falls into three statements: Order is amoral; law is contingent; justice is divisive. We do not believe that from three factors so described the highest faith with respect to government is to be invented.

[ 4 ]

First: order is amoral. The multiplication table, a picket fence, a row of dominoes may in turn be helpful, pleasing, entertaining in terms of our use of them, but they are not good or bad in terms of their orderliness. It is a primitive or infantile impulse that assigns a moral quality to what they do. Order is as innocent of evil as disorder. There are times, indeed, when disorder may properly be regarded as morally good. Disorder is the correct opposite of order. To violate the order of regulated traffic is disorderly conduct; it does not involve moral turpitude.

To point this out is not to solve the problems that pivot about it.

Curiously enough the commonplace notion of righteousness is little more than conformity to order and the good man is he who never gets out of line, just as the deviationist is the man to keep an eye on. If this conformity is to a moral order, then nonconformity is immoral; but the difficulty arises in the assessment of the moral quality of one's conduct when *conformity to order as such* is vested with moral sanction. "Everybody does it" is the excuse both for conformity and nonconformity but it is always in reference to what is regarded—at the moment—as the order of behavior, whether, paradoxically, order or disorder is the proper order.

Now it is because order as the aim of government is amoral that government rarely acts in terms of moral order and makes itself somewhat absurd when it seems to strike a moral pose or to talk in moral categories. The effort to make the German people confess a sense of guilt was early aborted by the simple logic of the situation. Those who—as a society—had followed the Nazi order could confess it had been disastrous for the German State, but to expect official contrition from them was absurd. To be sure, individuals who revolted from the evil order before its debacle may have acted from moral compulsions. In this case their disorder was a moral judgment on an evil order. After the collapse of Hitler's order other individuals confessed personal and corporate sin, but to ask this of the National Socialist State while it was intact, or of its shattered ruin when it was crushed, was to ask the impossible. There was unconscious hypocrisy in the pretentious moral superiority we exhibited toward the broken enemy when we asked, as a preliminary to our efforts to help him, a groveling confession of sin. When it was forthcoming it was far too often as hypocritical as our demand for it.

The essence of morality is acceptance of a moral order, a judgment of behavior in terms of the order, confession of failure (sin) when the order has been broken, and return to the order (redemption) by an act of the will. How far government is from this sort of thing was exhibited in one of the addresses of a United States Secretary of State, himself a man of high moral idealism and conduct, in which he agreed that while our relations with the Soviet government should be constantly under review, such self-examination must not pass into self-reproach. This foreclosed the possibility of a moral approach even



to the possibility of a diplomatic error. To reproach oneself is morally relevant to an individual, but to a government such a deviation from the order is disallowed. It is not easy, in this connection, to forego the impulse to discuss in detail what this amoral orderliness is doing to the world. Where each government sets up its own order of action, without reference to a transcendent moral order, and where a government cannot even reproach itself for its departure from its own order, the result is inevitably the self-righteousness of governments, their moralizings about the sins of others, and their truculent stubbornness against change induced by the elementary moral act of contrition.

## [ 5 ]

Second: Order, we have said, is amoral. We proceed to argue that law is contingent. This is a minor aspect of the vast subject of jurisprudence and is referred to here only because it is related to our original contention that faith in government as order, law, and justice, is not the highest to which we must give assent. Law, in this context, may be defined simply as a rule prescribed by authority for human conduct. It is unimportant whether as with Blackstone it is held that all law, wherever found, has divine origin: when God "put matter into motion He established certain laws of motion to which all movable matter must conform," and "no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this"; or with Austin it is agreed that law is a command addressed by one human superior to a human inferior. The significant fact is that whether law be studied historically or comparatively it is clear that its essence and authority are contingent on many factors. Geography, security (or lack of it), social patterns, contiguity, emergency—the list can be greatly extended. Roman, Greek, Mohammedan, English, American law; Constitutional, Common, Civil, Equity, International law—these all suggest essential differences both between and within legal systems. And yet, however laws are affected by adventitious circumstance and changed to meet social needs, all laws are essentially contrivances for bringing about a certain definite end. That end is order. Where law compels conformity to order, the result is lawful behavior even though the order be lawless in terms of the law of another group, or amoral in terms of a moral code.

To say that law is contingent on the level of human society is not to

set it in a unique category for that reason. What, one may ask, is not, on the human level, contingent? We shall not, therefore, abjure law as bad or unnecessary. In a real sense the larger ends, for which men strive within social orders that are in many important particulars quite distinct, are identical in all legal systems. It would follow that the more nearly the ends toward which man's individual and social pilgrimage lead him, converge, the less the element of contingency in the making and changing of laws. It is exactly at this point that the end of government conceived simply as order, is exposed as inadequate. What order, we ask? Here we are offered considerable variety to choose from, for the type of order men have sought is only slightly less varied than the laws by which they have undertaken to implement order. We have already argued that order *qua* order is amoral and intimated that men have sought to invest order with moral sanctions that run all the way from the quasi-moral to the transcendent. So long, however, as the end of government is order, and orders—as governments—are varied, we shall be confronted with the contingency of all laws. And once again it is not easy to resist the temptation to cite in detail what has happened to our world because of this fact. We will, however, forbear.

## [ 6 ]

The aim of government is order and its instrument is law. Justice is its ideal. In what way do we distinguish between an aim and an ideal? Justice is the impartial and unambiguous distribution of the benefits of society according to merit, under the established law. Stated thus it is clearly only our ideal, since it is unattainable within the human situation. Order is much more nearly within reach and the practical mind says if we can have order we will be well enough off and be allowed occasional moments in which reflection on the ideal end of justice might prove interesting.

Now while justice is an ideal end, dependent upon a well-maintained order, it also, of itself, must use both order and law to move progressively nearer its realization. And because it must use an instrument (law) which is contingent, and an aim (order) which is essentially amoral, it suffers from a serious limitation. It may seem overly fastidious to pick flaws in such a noble ideal but we shall certainly get no-



where in our efforts to achieve what government ultimately desires, by ignoring them. We have already indicated the weakness that is at the heart of human justice. Our reason for using the word *human* will be apparent later. Justice is, in the nature of the case, divisive. This is its Achilles' heel.

This is not in itself an evil. On the contrary. The cardinal fact of the discreteness of all created things is the beginning of all careful investigation of phenomena. Otherwise one lump classification would satisfy human curiosity. So the separateness of things is one of the rudimentary facts with which we live. But its opposite is the coordinate nature of things—of everything, perhaps. The discrete particle serves the purpose of its existence by its relation to something else—to everything, perhaps. Thus neither discontinuity nor continuity is absolute since there is a natural relation or contiguity between all things.

In the experience that society provides the individual, both as unity and as separateness from his fellows, he will find order or disorder, and he will invoke law to achieve a maximum of the former. In doing this he is under the necessity of making sharp and clear divisions between facts and persons and experiences. When there is disorder he will employ the laws of his group to disengage, untangle, and then to rearrange. In this he is dispensing justice or—to put it in nonlegal terms—he is straightening things out. The process is essentially the same whether it be dealing with a brawl between bullies, a lovers' quarrel, or a case before the Supreme Court. It is the business of justice to divide between right and wrong in terms of the accepted code or the written law. This is why a member of the Supreme Court is called a Justice, or Mr. Justice Blank.

To be sure, if the processes of justice are correctly exercised and the rewards or penalties properly meted out, the hope is that the litigants in the case at court or the belligerent bullies will agree that their interests have been well served and that they will therefore leave the scene of dispute arm in arm and in good humor. But justice cannot regard such a result as more than a by-product of her efforts. She stands with the scales in her hands and weighs the issue in the balance with complete detachment and announces her verdict. Whether it is accepted

or not, or pleasing, is no affair of hers. She turns, once the case is settled, and awaits the next on the docket.

Furthermore, justice very often is unjust, no matter how lofty her pretensions to impartiality. She is concerned with an order that must be protected by law, but the order may be evil and the law may be bad. Unless she is more wise than the law she will fail to be just because of the laws she uses. If she takes the law in her own hands she is an enemy of order. Through no inherent fault of her own she may turn out to be vengeful, capricious, punitive, and biased, in terms of the idea of justice held in a neighbor society. What is sauce for the goose is rarely sauce for the gander. And what if the one who is ordered to savor the condiment is a vegetarian, following an order and dietary laws that make eating flesh improper if not evil? Who, for example, in the interests of strict justice, can exchange an eye for an eye without knowing with the exact certainty of an oculist that the eyes are equal? Or a tooth for a tooth? The measuring of justice must be the most precise of all exercises. This is the logic of claims to infallibility in the areas of faith and morals, claims that must be disqualified for other than logical reasons.

The dilemma of the judge is therefore as ancient as the first code of law. He has been able to resolve it only by approximations that are called rough justice, and if perchance he has believed in a judgment that transcends that of men he is likely to do the best he can with contingent laws in a dubious order and hope that in some future assize the balances he has teetered will at last be correctly struck. Even then he cannot be sure, for in an ultimate post-mortem judgment will not man be judged in terms of a transcendent order and transcendent laws, by a transcendent judge? How can justice be served by *ex post facto* laws, even though they be applied by a celestial court?

Yet for all this we shall not forswear justice. It still is an ideal and if it cannot do what man's ultimate needs demand, we will still make the best use of it that we can. But we will not be beguiled by its efforts at impartiality into believing that it supplies to man the answer to his deepest social need. Beyond this it is necessary to say that since order, law, and justice cannot be absolute on the human level, they are always threatened by human pretensions. Because the human spirit is what it is, it will protect the order to which it is accustomed by investing it



with spurious moral qualities. This is what happens when Marxism, capitalism, Americanism, democracy, etc., are challenged. To defend the *status quo* all the big guns of morality are brought into position and the challengers are destroyed—if possible—not in the name of order, but in the name of righteousness. Similarly it is a manifestation of human pride when absolute values are given to laws that can never be anything but contingent so that to break a law is to commit a sin. This *may* be so; but it is nonsense to equate lawlessness as such with unrighteousness. Again justice as an ideal and as a practice is not exempt from the perverting influences of egotism. Power generally insists that what it is able to do is not only right (in terms of law) but just (in terms of an ideal settlement). Thus tyranny can claim the support of laws it creates to enforce an order it approves, and go on to describe the order it creates as justice. Once more the temptation to cite the record of what has happened in our world because of this is insistent, but once again, we think it unnecessary.

## [ 7 ]

We have been considering faith and government and have explored the meanings that are implicit in a social order that regards order, law, and justice as the highest meaning that can be given to government. And we have set forth reasons why such a faith seems inadequate in its response to human needs. It is necessary to advance the reasons for believing that the Judeo-Christian faith in God is superior, is in fact the highest meaning that can be given government. God makes the difference.

The faith we have been compelled to set aside as inadequate is the faith of naturalism as it concerns social processes and ends. It is more familiarly called the faith of secularism. If God is the highest meaning that can be given to everything, social processes and ends must be encompassed within that meaning. This by no means can be taken to suggest that the secularist faith is an evil thing. This is the palpable error of those sects that regard all earthly governments as defiance of God. Some of these are so-called Christian groups. It is interesting that Marxism agrees that government is evil, though not because it has defied God. The ultimate issue of the dialectic of history will be eventually to erode away all government. No; the Christian religion can—

and does—take two attitudes: man-made government is a temporary expedient, filling in until a God-made government can be superimposed; or it is a discipline for the guidance of men into the fuller experience of community. In the former case, civil government is not repudiated, which would be anarchy or chiasm; in the latter case—to use the language of Paul—"the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ."

Certainly the concepts of order, law, and justice are not hostile to religious faith. There has always been a tendency to reduce the total Christian experience to these three categories and no little success, in terms of a high quality of life, has in some cases, been achieved. This is part of the record of monasticism. The concern of Christian thought on the matter of government focuses on the *intention* and methods of order, law, and justice. In other words, while the secularist view of government can easily accept these three components as the end of society, in the Christian view they can never be more than means in the quest of community. This would seem to say then that government within the compass of Christian thought must be supplied with components superior to order, law, and justice as they are conceived in the secular mind. Christianity, to put it bluntly, must produce an advance upon the distances already covered in man's long trek from savagery to social cohesion.

We must remind ourselves again of our discussion of religion and God (Chapter II). There it was said that the highest meaning we can give to God is that He is all-inclusive, dynamic, cohesive, and loving, etc. If God is to give meaning to what we call government, it must be mediated through these four qualities. We shall attempt this, taking them in reverse order.

What of the relation between justice and love? Endlessly we debate this, and, because we say we live in a practical and not a dream world, we settle for justice, rough-and-tumble though it generally is. But why should we be concerned with justice? Prior to the effort to be just with our fellows is a hidden impulse. It may be vengeance—an eye for an eye; it may be love—the other cheek. It is not hard to decide which of these is Christian. It is the latter that makes of justice, not a divider, but the agent of unity and cohesion. Indeed if we do not have a love for mankind—whether instinctive or reasoned—there is no reason why



we should want to see justice done. If our interest in justice is vengeance, we are committed, not to the ways of community but to disunity, disorder, and lawlessness.

It follows upon this that the Christian order is the order of love, and the law is the law of love, even as justice is the result of love. It is only this way that the power of God which is creative love, and the cohesion of God, and the inclusiveness of God can be related to the social controls under which men live. Civil law accepts the social entity as it is; it regulates and preserves it. It did not create it, nor can it create another. Given a group with a measure of codifiable experience, it writes laws. But the Christian idea of a creating God provides for the dynamics of creation at work within society to make of it a new kind of society. Law, which is the instrument of justice in the interests of order, is enlarged in the Christian concept to love which is the cohesive instrument in stabilizing the order of community. Furthermore, there is provided here a prophylaxis against the corruption of law by selfishness and pride and the perversion of justice by power. There may be an argument as to whether man wants this sort of a government. Much evidence exists that he does not want it greatly enough to work for it very hard. And this may be the sin that is corrupting the world's life and inviting a terrible judgment of annihilation.

In short, the Christian faith introduces into the administration of society a moral factor. The Christian idea of order is a moral order, an order that inheres in the nature of God. The Christian idea of law is a moral law in which lawlessness is rebellion against God and the community. The Christian idea of justice is moral justice that finds its impetus in the love that seeks ultimately and everywhere to unite mankind in fellowship and community. Thus goodness is not conformity merely, it is creative love acting in the direction of cohesion. Jesus replied to a man, who already separated from his brother by anger, asked for an act of justice that would further separate him by the invocation of law, "Who made me a judge and a divider over you?" Have we yet plumbed the depth of that remarkable rejoinder?

It is no simple matter to introduce a moral factor into social experience. The dilemma it creates is seen in some of our epic efforts to do so. In the history of Israel there was the clear merging of political and moral dynamics in the greatest theocratic experiment of all time.

Why it failed is not a part of our present concern. It seems evident that the enactment of law stymied the effort to create a community of love. The later prophets saw this but their stentorian warnings were unheeded. How great the failure and the cause of it is to be variously understood, but the amazing contemporary *fact-of-Israel* is testimony to the imperishability of the reality of community as a cohesive power greater than law or justice.

Similarly one might enlarge upon the effort in the Christian era to re-create a theonomous government under the aegis of Rome, after the centuries of debacle and darkness in Europe. Monasticism was an escapist device; but popes on the throne of Peter grasped the nettle of government with stout hands. What they did with it is the historian's interest. That there has never been an abatement of Rome's effort to unite somehow the authorities of Church and State, or to keep within her armory the Two Swords—civil and ecclesiastical—is testimony to her faithfulness to what she thinks is her divine commission. It is our prediction that we shall not return to the theocratic order of Israel or Rome. We live in different times and our solution must be found in another direction.

Is it dramatized for us today in the struggle between democracy and totalitarianism? The difference between these titans does not lie in the belief in law, order, and justice by the one and their repudiation by the other, but by the ends they are thought to serve. Democracy with all its immaturities and blemishes believes that man can be creative and can achieve community and offers freedom for the effort. Thomas Mann<sup>1</sup> has said: "Despite so much ridiculous depravity, we cannot forget the great and honorable in man, which manifest themselves as art and science, as passion for truth, creation of beauty and the idea of justice . . . insensitiveness to the great mystery which we touch upon when we say 'man' or 'humanity' signifies spiritual death." And a democrat of a somewhat different background said: "A moral life is an active cooperation in God's order of the world. Love, fellow-feeling, united effort—that is the law of life, whether it be for two people, a family, a nation, a state, a race. I know no other law."<sup>2</sup> The cynic may

<sup>1</sup> *The Coming Victory of Democracy*, tr. by Agnes E. Meyer (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1938).

<sup>2</sup> *President Masaryk Tells His Story*, tr. and ed. by Karel Capek (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1935).



ask what has become of Thomas Mann's Germany and Thomas Masaryk's Czechoslovakia, but the answer is not a cancellation of the possibilities that still are afforded by democratic government. Certain it is that the recent despoiler of Masaryk's handiwork used coercions in the direction of its utopian classless society that destroy the only agency—love—that can bring it (community) about.

It seems to us fairly clear that the choice is a simple one to see but an appallingly difficult one to make. It says that to make government conform to the pattern of religious faith is to promise us the security and happiness of community in an insecure and unhappy world. But the cost of this, first in humility and honest contrition and then in courage and hard work, is, in all conscience, all but prohibitive to the spiritually impecunious. And yet, suppose we allow a concern for economy of spiritual effort to regulate our spiritual outlay. What then?

## Chapter VIII

### God and Organized Christianity

PERHAPS a quick explanation needs to follow the introduction of this theme into our general study. There is no intention here to be flippant about the relation of faith as the resolve to give the highest explanation to all that we know to that corpus of idea, order, action, and authority that can be summed up under the words *organized Christianity*. There are some who are amused by the pretensions of the Church to be the depository of religious truth. Others are irritated by its assumption of power. It is not difficult to evince support for the cynicism that dismisses all organized religion as unimportant except for antiquarians. While it is evident that there is an interest in religion in general and in certain Christian formulations of it in particular, and that at certain points the circumferences of natural science and religious thought meet and cross and form a sector of practical—and even metaphysical—agreement, nevertheless the interest in established religious institutions is not correlatively enhanced. This is to be seen as the operation of the social law that describes the diminution of the power of social institution in ratio to its distance from the experience out of which it grows.

This is an old story: the assent to basic ideas does not carry with it the necessity of participation in the institution that rationalizes and defends the ideas, and this is observed in every area of social experience. The lone wolf may be explained psychologically or socially. His fondness for ideas may reflect itself in dislike of people, and reasons, hidden in his obscure past, may account for it. The ivory tower has almost become an institution itself. Not infrequently those who are



wisest are the least inclined to put their wisdom into practical action. The man who expostulates with great fervor about the glories of democracy will often find going to the polls to cast his vote an inconvenience and the precinct worker a nuisance. And who has not heard the lament of the ecclesiastic that the man, who by spiritual and intellectual sensitivity is genuinely a companion in truth very often insists on remaining an alien to the courts of the temple? That by failing to participate in the institutional life of the church they subtract from its possibilities of constant rejuvenation is a disturbing fact. That they fear—and for good reasons—that the custodians of the institution might repulse any effort they were prepared to make for its revitalization is excuse enough for their solitary practices of religion. All this points up the fact that there is a lacuna between Christian understanding and experience and the Christian community as it is represented by the institutions of Christianity. How it is to be bridged or filled in is a problem of no small dimensions.

## [ 1 ]

We are brought back, for the moment, to the matter of community. It has been described already (Chapter VI) in terms of its verbal genealogy as "that which is bound together in a strong (fortified) fellowship for the good of all." Also it was pointed out that this can describe any sort of community, bound together for any good that it cherishes and distributes among its members. That such a concept is more congenial to the Christian fellowship than any other is due solely to the fact that God is conceived as all-inclusive, dynamic, cohesive, and loving. The assumption is that membership in this community comes by no accident of birth but by voluntary choice. For this reason it lies on a level higher than the communities into which we are fortuitously introduced. Furthermore, it is assumed that the reasons this community has for being what it is, have already become the reasons for the members being what they are, when they have committed themselves to it.

It is pertinent to our study of the relation and importance of faith as we have defined it, to consider the plight of organized Christianity. This is not only the proper concern of church folk; it is the proper concern of those who study the church from the perspectives of soci-

ology and anthropology. No student of western culture can understand it without seeing the ferment of moral and intellectual experience that gave rise to the church. Nor do we think a correct forecast of what is to happen to Western culture can be approximated without reference to it. Certainly when the Roman Catholic segment of the Christian movement believes that it is the only barrier between our Western society and the turgid flood of a new Eastern culture—and may actually prove to be—it is deserving of study by all those who are concerned with the survival of civilization as we have described it in Chapter VI.

It is not necessary to sketch the rise of the institutions of the Christian religion from their initial impetus—let us say in the adventuresome spirits of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—through the intervening centuries to the present hour. The situation just described in which intellectual agreement in wide areas of religious and scientific thought is paralleled by indifference to, or distrust of, modern institutionalized religion, is something that is comparatively recent. In 1779 the Conservatives in the General Assembly of Virginia sought to secure the passage of a bill that would establish, by government sanction and support, those Societies (churches) that would subscribe to the following propositions: (1) that there is one Eternal God and a future State of Rewards and Punishments; (2) that God is publicly to be worshiped; (3) that the Christian Religion is the true Religion; (4) that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are of divine inspiration, and are the only rule of Faith; (5) that it is the duty of every man, when thereunto called by those who govern, to bear witness to truth.<sup>1</sup> The Conservatives lost to those who repudiated the idea of any tie-up between the authorities of State and Church, but their interest in the dispute was religious rather than political. Indeed they insisted that their zeal for the separation of Church and State was inspired solely by their personal acceptance of these five propositions and their concern that they should be generally held and practiced and made normative for everybody.

Today one would hardly be honored with so respectable a name as conservative if he made such a proposal in a state or the national governing body. *Crackpot* would be a quicker appellation. Why? Not

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in R. Freeman Butts, *American Tradition in Religion and Education* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950), p. 54.



because we are grossly secularized, as some think, or because we have settled the question of Church-State relations. Is it not rather that religion has, even for the religiously committed, a peripheral concern? In other words, has not the institution become an end in itself with vested interests to protect, and is therefore resistant to change? Does it not fear freedom, for itself and its constituents? The idea of community in religion is made concrete by the free acceptance of its benefits and obligations by those who enter it. This freedom is not only the door by which one enters; it is the talisman one carries always on his person—or more correctly, in his heart. To lose or forfeit that freedom is to fracture the community. The contention of those who still insist on the separation of Church and State is that only free religion—free from political or ecclesiastical domination—can be sufficiently vital to find new experiences to keep it alive and new adaptations to life to keep it meaningful.

## [ 2 ]

For this reason our study will involve us only in the segment of history that stretches roughly from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries, and the influence of that period on our ideas of freedom. The essence of the matter was set forth in Section 2 of Chapter V, but the problem is of sufficient importance to resume the discussion in a more detailed treatment in this connection.

What is freedom? When we sing "Let freedom ring" what sort of sound do we expect to hear: the agitated summons of the telephone or the booming reverberations of a giant bell? Despite the fact that freedom as a word is familiar and as an ideal is sought and cherished, there are indications that although two world wars have been recently fought to defend and extend it, we do not live in a free world if the word is given any realistic meaning. Are we to have another war to give freedom another chance? Is our inner wish to be free, as individuals and as groups, a delusion? Are those wholly wrong who say man is more secure and therefore more happy under totalitarian tyranny than in a free society? Has not the great age of freedom passed, and is not the demand of the present that we learn to make the necessary accommodations to authoritarianism as soon as possible?

This is a random sampling of the questions that are being seriously

asked today, and if we are to answer them seriously, we shall find it necessary to set our answers within the framework of the faith we hold, of the meaning, that is, that we give to all that we know. And we must be prepared, both to answer and to resist the answers that arise from faiths different from our own. Here is a challenge to Christianity, both in its experience and in its institutions, that we shall not find easy either to acknowledge or to ignore.

We return to the discussion in Chapter V and the observation that the two words that most precisely represent the word *freedom* today are *independence* and *autonomy*. The former literally means suspended from nothing. More conventionally it means separate. Thus one may be independent of enemies, of disease, or want. The War of Independence separated us from the British Empire and Jefferson wrote a Declaration of Independence telling why. Thus independence marks limits beyond which others may not trespass. It may be arrogant or gentle, but it will be firm. It may set a gulf between us and our fellows or only a hedge between neighbors, but it always makes the primary assumption that I, my crowd, class, nation, or culture, is a unit different from every other. In order, therefore, to preserve that difference I must keep inviolate my independence, even if it leaves me, literally, dangling from nothing in the emptiness of space.

Autonomy is a less common synonym but its meaning is simple: it means self-rule. As independence means separation from other circumstances than our own, autonomy means separation from other laws than our own. This, of course, is a necessary concomitant of independence, for to maintain barriers that separate us we must have regulations within the barriers that we impose upon ourselves, and being free to make these rules is the condition we call autonomy.

We must distinguish between self-rule and self-mastery or self-control. The latter two are measurably possible even under the rule of another and are a sign of moral maturity. The famous case of the slave-philosopher Epictetus and his Roman master is a case in point. But autonomy says: I am responsible for myself; and therefore I make rules for myself. So says also the crowd, class, nation, or culture, and there is essential magnanimity in the claim. "He that is slow to anger," said an ancient observer of the human struggle, "is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32). Put in more modern language the present-day observer, if he



were as wise, would say: Independence is better than power and autonomy than conquest.

These two words are the modern equivalents of freedom. It is interesting to see how they came to have this status. Wherever there is limitation on action—personal, political, social—the ideas of independence and autonomy flourish. Men want to be separated from their chains and make their own rules for behavior. Certainly the most dramatic era in our cultural history, the Renaissance-Reformation, is memorable for the impetus it gave to these two ideas. After the chaos of the Dark Ages there had emerged an order of society that was concentered during the tenth to the twelfth centuries in the social pattern we call feudalism and the politico-religious pattern we know as the Roman Catholic Church. The ferment that was able to create this socio-political order stimulated to further activity the impetus to freedom that is latent in every human spirit. Thus the Renaissance is generally regarded as the flowering of art, drama, music, philosophy, invention, etc., which expressed the desire of those who wanted to break out of the forms set by the old order. Their practitioners separated themselves from conventional ways of self-expression and made new rules for their artistic efforts. So also was the rise of capitalism the result of breaking away from the feudal lord, and the new rules controlling the fashioning and exchanging of goods were made by the free craftsmen and merchandisers. Similarly Luther, who symbolizes the breaking away from the authority of the Church, was the beginner of a long line of those who invented new ideas and orders by which they gave expression to their newly-won independence and set up new rules for the Christian fellowship.

Thus *independence* and *autonomy*, separation and self-rule, became the activating ideals and energies of the three explosive centuries that have followed the sixteenth. They have seen the creation of new art forms, new social patterns, new concentrates of political and financial power, new institutions—educational and religious—and exciting new ideas. In short—a new culture, a new world. Paradoxically, and ironically, they have created the very world that today is deeply perplexed over the meaning and possibility of freedom, freedom that has lost the confidence it had when Shelley wrote:<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> "Prometheus Unbound."

To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite;  
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;  
To defy power which seems omnipotent;  
To love and bear; to hope till hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;  
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;  
This is alone life, joy, empire, and victory.

Why, we ask from our present stance, has this hope (freedom conceived as independence and autonomy) failed to create "from its own wreck the thing it contemplates"? Why has this splendid defiance of power "which seems omnipotent" not paid off? Can it be that this concept of freedom, despite all that it has made possible, has lost its moral moorings? Titan, says Shelley, on his glorious way to freedom will "neither . . . falter, nor repent." He may have overshot his goal. Today we, no Titans, falter. Perhaps it is we also who must repent.

[ 3 ]

While we falter we may examine these two synonyms of freedom. They may turn out to be perversions or distortions and not synonyms at all. Concerning them there are two things to add to what has been said in Chapter V. There we pointed out their origin in the turbulent context of the middle centuries in Europe, and their logical issue: independence ends in death and autonomy in chaotic anarchy. Whether anything ever goes as far as logic invites it is another matter. In this case, independence, since all life is a plexus of relationships from which we escape only when death rescues us, heads us in its direction. Freedom, it may be argued, is death. Perhaps; but it is not the freedom for which the soul of man strives unless he is the victim of the most cruel hoax. Similarly the logic of autonomy is uninviting when we come face to face with it. From the moment there were two people on the earth, self-rule was impossible. All of Adam's inclinations to do as he pleased were qualified by the presence of Eve. He could not even make a private decision about an apple. Thus, autonomy precipitates not only the end of order but of freedom also. Independence and autonomy can



never be ends in the way that freedom is an end. At this point we have allowed ourselves to be misled by the shining words.

To these observations we add the fact that independence tends to competitiveness since it is but a short step from being separate from my fellow to being his rival. Competition has its basic uses and values and to it may be traced much in man's record of advancement, but it risks the impairment of fellowship. And when rivalry displaces co-operation, autonomy fashions laws that flatter each competitor, and social cohesion is not only destroyed, it is rationalized by self-made laws and bulwarked by self-pride.

The final comment about independence and autonomy as the synonyms of freedom is a very practical observation: in our modern world we have independence and autonomy but little freedom. Freedom in superficial matters—choice of vegetables and dessert or the color of a necktie, yes; freedom in contingent matters—the right to drive a car so long as we stay on the right side of the highway, yes. In this category we also find the freedoms we call civil liberties, free enterprise, etc., but do we have what we can honestly call a free world in terms of the full realization of the essence of our individual and corporate selfhood? This is the reason that instead of the sonorous note of a giant bell we hear the jangle of a thousand discordant notes when we say "Let freedom ring." It is necessary, if we are to hear the big bell, to re-examine the concept of freedom in terms of its basic essence.

[ 4 ]

What is the basic freedom? Put briefly it is the experience of fully being what one really is. To this, prince and ragamuffin, tyrant and democrat will agree: The argument comes when one attempts to say exactly *what one is*. If I cannot decide on that, I shall never be free or I shall never know when I am free, which amounts to the same thing.

Basic freedom is, as we have said, a matter of essence, not of taste or contingency. If I am nothing more than an eater of vegetables or desserts, basic freedom will be fully satisfied by selecting from a menu. If I am only a citizen of a so-called free society, my sense of freedom will be fully satisfied by the exercise of civil rights, or by buying and selling in a free market, or by worshiping God according to the dictates (that does not sound like freedom, does it!) of my conscience.

Because our whole study is set within the framework of faith in God as the essence of religion, and because the Christian religion is the deposit and ferment left in, and activated by, the Biblical record, it is necessary to turn thither for an answer to the question: what is man? If we can get an answer to that, we can come within range, at least, of what his basic freedom amounts to.

Nothing is more clear than that the Bible is busy from beginning to end with this question. In majestic language it has its first formulation in the familiar words: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). Man is of the dust, but he is not dust, else his basic freedom would be conditioned by the caprice of the weather. Man is a breathing creature, but he is not breath, else his basic freedom would depend on the condition of his lungs and his access to air. Man is not the owner or custodian of a soul, *he is a living soul*. Here we have three great concepts brought together to explain what man is: the creative act of the Lord God; the created essence; and the infused vital principle. If freedom lies in being fully what one really is, the basic freedom of man rests in his being fully a living soul, for only in this way can he express to the uttermost the basic essence of his nature.

This is not independence, though a sense of, and a wish for, independence may energize one's pursuit of it; it is not autonomy, though a conscious desire to accept responsibility may be related to it. If freedom is neither independence or autonomy and not to be had by the simple experience of self-isolation or self-rule, how is it to be had?

Here again, since freedom is the heart and intention of the Judeo-Christian revelation, we look for our answer within the Biblical record. Simply put it says: Soul freedom is found in bondage to God. Here lies the giant paradox of freedom: That soul is free that is in voluntary bondage to the Eternal God. Observe how consistent is this emphasis that man is free when he voluntarily yields his living soul to God who made it: "So shall I observe thy law continually forever and ever; and I shall walk at liberty because I have sought thy precepts" (Psalm 119:44-45). No independence or autonomy there.

Listen to the words of Christ himself: "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth and the truth



shall make you free" (John 8:31). No independence (isolation of one's life as an entity to be preserved for itself) and no autonomy there.

Listen to the Great Apostle: "He that was called being free, is Christ's bondservant" (I Corinthians 7:22). No independence or autonomy there.

Here is an insight so uniformly encountered in the sacred record that it cannot be missed by those who seek to understand freedom in terms of the religious tradition that is germinal to our culture. Here is no preoccupation with independence, no strident demand for autonomy. Here rather is the living soul of man seeking freedom by dependence and theonomy, a paradox that says man is basically free only by being a voluntary bondservant to his creator.

[ 5 ]

Now for the very reason that the human mind is restive with paradox, it will either undertake to resolve it or to evade it. If he is intent on the former he will accept such aid as is offered him; if he consents to the latter he is committed to blindness. This paradox of freedom—freedom by voluntary bondage—does not make sense to the secular mind. Bondage means that by the redemptive power of God man is free from sin and is released for the task of laboring with God in the creation of the Beloved Community. To the Christian mind this is both man's glory and despair: his glory because ideally an identity with the creative will of God provides the highest meaning he can give to all that he knows; his despair because man's self-will, unredeemed by the grace of God, stands in proud but impotent defiance, claiming a primordial right to independence and autonomy, boasting that they are the essence of freedom.

In his perplexity—for paradox is simply one's perplexity in a state of temporary equilibrium—he seeks help. And in the experience of our Christian, Western, democratic culture, he is offered aid by the two great social patterns within which he lives: the Civil Order and the Ecclesiastical Order—the State and the Church. The first of these has come about because of the necessity of men to live together in an order, controlled by law in the interests of justice. The second has come about because of the necessity of men to live together with God in an order, controlled by law in the interests of freedom. The first has produced

the State and Government; the second has produced the Church and Religion.

Says the State to the man puzzled with this paradox of freedom: if you would be free, yield yourself to me and I will give you justice under law. Whether the State be democratic or totalitarian, the proposition is always the same, and because the offer is honestly proposed and the civil order is made tolerable except to the congenitally rebellious, man accepts. And yet the justice that is promised him may achieve by law the same sort of sunderance from his fellows that he achieves for himself by the exercise of independence. Still, since there are practical accommodations he can make, he will settle for that, grateful that it has provided him escape from the prison of paradox. To be sure, he will mistake this condition for the true freedom that can be won only by the surrender of his living soul to God, but half a loaf is good enough.

More tragically—if this can be thought tragic—the State that offers him justice instead of freedom can, and frequently does, as we have noted above, pervert justice to the interests of power, and thus, in the very name of justice, the most complete withdrawal of freedom of every sort can take place. A recent translation of a Soviet code of morals clearly stated that man's freedom was a highly contingent factor resting entirely on the fortunes of the State, so that if the State decided it was necessary, man could expect neither justice nor freedom. Latent in any State is this evil—an evil to be averted only by those who have known and accepted the paradox of man's basic freedom.

The State is, however, not alone in offering help to paradox-hectored man. Says the Church: if you would be free, yield yourself to me and I will give you freedom under grace. Because the Church is a religious order it is easy to be beguiled into the notion that the freedom it offers is the freedom of the soul. But in the nature of the case this cannot be. It makes little difference whether the Church be authoritarian or free, it will make substantially the same claim, though support offered for the claim may differ conspicuously. The demands of creed and sacrament, of priesthood and priestcraft, make it possible for the suppliant for the Church's grace to receive in exchange for his surrender only the conditional freedoms that are analogous to those allowed by the civil state.



What has actually happened in the case of man's surrender to both the civil and the ecclesiastical orders is that he has offered his soul, not to its creator but to an institution. And, as has been pointed out elsewhere, when an institution becomes concerned to protect its vested interests it can destroy the experiences that gave it birth. When either the Church or the State claims—in the interests of its self-protection—the right of absolute possession of the soul of man, it can—and often does—go ahead and deny all man's superficial and contingent freedoms in the name of its spurious right to possess and determine the destiny of man's soul. This is exactly what the totalitarian Church and the totalitarian State claim. Man's tastes are arbitrated and his freedoms, both secular and religious, are contravened by their power. When this has happened, for man to protest and lament his loss of freedoms may be regarded by the State as subversive, and by the Church as heretical.

Man's soul, we repeat, is inviolably his own to do with it what he will. He may exchange it for independence and autonomy or cheaper freedoms. He may yield it to folly and sin, or he can bring it to God, but the choice is indefeasibly his own. No matter how well-intentioned State and Church may be, they must not, even in the sacred name of freedom, lay coercive hands on man's living soul.

## [ 6 ]

We have pointed out that in the area of personal experience the logic of independence is death and of autonomy is anarchy; that separation excites competitiveness and that self-rule stimulates self-pride. For these reasons men, however much they may exalt independence and autonomy as the essence of freedom, have found it necessary to live together in civil society under the rule of law, and in doing this have sacrificed to a considerable extent their independence and their autonomy. And their freedom.

If we discover that the offer or relief from State and Church in resolving or evading the paradox of freedom does not pay off, to what are we to go for help? Once again, since freedom is the heart and intention of the Judeo-Christian revelation, we seek our guidance in the Biblical record. The answer to the paradox of freedom is clear: voluntary bondage to God. This willing surrender expects of the living soul no cringing, servile, abject attachment; it promises fulfillment in

fellowship. This is the idea of the Beloved Community that appears in embryo in the idyll of Eden; that fired the heart of Abram with the restless dream of a multitudinous family of God; that kindled like racing flame in the words of the prophets who proclaimed the convocation of all nations upon Mount Zion; that encouraged a dispirited and subjugated generation with the words of the Master about the Kingdom of God; and that in the insights of Paul described the impatient groaning of Creation, waiting for the birth of the Sons of God. Finally the Seer of Patmos foresaw the descent of a new Jerusalem from heaven within which God and man were to be tabernacled together.

We cannot escape this. It is the only way the paradox of freedom as presented in the Biblical tradition is to be resolved. Man and God are separate but man finds freedom in community with God; man and man are separate but they find freedom in community with each other. The logic of this spiritual fact is relentless. Does it not press hard also upon the secular world?

Let us agree that such an understanding both of the nature of freedom and of the way it is won in community could not have been possible until comparatively recent times. The failure of independence and autonomy to achieve freedom in the secular world had to be exposed by the logic of events before the same process could be traced in the world of organized religion. It was necessary that in the sixteenth century the monolith of Rome should be riven in order that religious liberty could be released. During the 430 years since Luther's daring act, the right to be religiously free has won wide acceptance in the world. It has finally been written into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved 48-0 (eight nations abstaining) by the United Nations in Paris, December 10, 1948. The magnitude of that achievement can hardly be overstated. In other words, that victory was possible by an initial act of separation and a bold claim to autonomy. And yet, we must remind ourselves again, we do not yet live in a free world.

[ 7 ]

The point of all this pricks sharply our complacent faith—or our faiths that rest on levels that are not the highest. To the sociologist who regards the institutions of religions as artifacts or the product of social



dynamics that will change with time and disappear if they lose their social utility, such a discussion is of only moderate interest. Such faith as he has lacks what we have described as the all-inclusiveness, dynamic, cohesiveness, and love of God. He will see, however, that this idea of community is being given dramatic expression in the fields of domestic and international politics. Will we ever go back to the gaudy days of absolute sovereignty among national groups? Here we have discovered that independence and autonomy are a two-lane highway to death. Our only hope today is in the Community of Nations.

Similarly our sociologist and his colleague in the department of economics see—sometimes reluctantly—that the days of free enterprise as they were once known as the independence and autonomy of those who own productive capital, are gone. However much men may rail against a welfare state, it is simply the result of the tireless movement of the logic of community, pressing on all the areas of life. It will take time, to be sure, but the day is surely coming when co-operation will nudge competition out of the way of progress, when the freedom of enterprise will be the freedom found only in community; when the civil state will be, not the instrument of groups that find their satisfactions in separating themselves from their fellows (privilege) and in making laws to justify their selfish use of power, but will be a community into which all will voluntarily surrender selfish prerogatives for the wider life of the community.

This is, of course, a religious idea, a Biblical concept, a derivative, we think, of the faith that finds God as the highest meaning of all that we know. But the idea of freedom that this faith has always cherished has, as we have been saying, been slowly compelling the assent of the secular social and political world. No one seriously argues that segregation with a limited society of a people because of the accident of birth is either morally right or in the long run socially practical. The clearest words on this matter have been spoken by secularists whose faith is concerned with the improvement of secular society. They have seen that racial discrimination is the evil face of independence and that race segregation is the ill-begotten child of autonomy. It is the religious consensus that is laggard.

In the light of this does it not seem strange that organized Christi-

anity is still the most adamant resister of this implication of the faith it has nurtured and given to the secularists? The reason for this lies partly in the historical matrix out of which the free churches were delivered and partly in the conservatism of religion itself. The result of the Renaissance-Reformation was, as has been said, the experience of independence and autonomy that gave a new culture to our world. No area of life was untouched by this, and so spectacular were its results that it was inevitable that freedom should have come to be understood in those terms. That our secular world is today looking for a new meaning of freedom in community is the result of the failure of independence and autonomy to bring about a free world. Today the political mind of the West is convinced by the logic of events, if not by syllogisms, that the only answer to the totalitarian political threat posed by the USSR is to be found in united democracy, or as it might be put in this context, in the Community of Democracy. Separate and self-governing democratic sovereignties are too weak for a united totalitarian State.

It would appear then to be almost too obvious to mention that by the same logic of events, the answer to a totalitarian Church is the Community of Free Churches. Understandably there are those outside the Christian fellowship to whom the disputes among the free churches and between them and the Roman Catholic Church are distasteful and nothing more. Distasteful they may be, but for all that they are not without significance. It should be conceded that religion is more often a conservative than a creative force in society. This is true despite the fact that the Reformation was, at its beginning, heretical radicalism that could be dealt with only by excommunication. There have been creative spirits who have expressed themselves within the area of religion. There ought to be more of them. By and large, however, orthodox religion is more of a sedative than a stimulant, and its radicals are generally repudiated by their sedate fellows as irreligious persons, overstimulated by some peculiar virus of sin or nonsense. Ecu-  
menicism has been called by some both an illness and an evil.

Furthermore, conscience is the basic weapon in the defensive equipment of the religious foot soldier. When the logic of events demands a radical change in direction, conscience can very easily persuade him



that it is safer to stay put. It has never been better said than in Hamlet's most famous speech.<sup>3</sup> Thus the experience of the Reformation and the conservative character of the religious experience have seen "enterprises of great pith and moment," "lose the name of action."

As to the chasm that divides the Roman Catholic Church from the free churches it must be said that until Rome abandons its claims to absolutism she cannot expect to be the core about which the Christian community will cohere. This is said with no sense of pique. Rome still mistakes independence and autonomy for freedom and because of that secularistic perversion of the Biblical idea, she cannot satisfy the demand of the human spirit for soul liberty. And so long as she lays claim to dominion over man's soul, she falsifies the basic premise upon which man's claim to basic freedom rests—namely, that his soul is indefeasibly his own and that his freedom comes by voluntarily committing himself in an undeputized act of self-dedication to his Creator alone.

As to the divisions between the Free churches it must be said that they, no less than Rome, are the victims of the historic secularistic perversion of freedom into independence and autonomy. In this bad bargain the basic freedom has been exchanged for superficial and contingent freedoms. We of the Free churches are independent and autonomous. How we love to describe ourselves with those orotund syllables. Yet are we free in terms of being fully what we essentially are? No. We have not only missed the essence of freedom but we have institutionalized our errors in the ever-mounting proliferations of sectarianism. The whole meaning of the modern Ecumenical Movement, represented by mergers on the regional and denominational level, and by a World Council of Churches on the level of the total World Christian Community, is to be understood properly as a creative effort to correct an error and recapture freedom.

The threat to religious liberty, and its profounder surrogate—basic

<sup>3</sup> "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pith and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action."

*Hamlet*, Act III, Sc. 1.

freedom—comes today from two sources. A completely secularized totalitarian State denies all freedom as we know it; and a totalitarian Church promises freedom only to those who surrender to its authority. Does it not appear that while in 1520 freedom had to be won by a temporary fragmentation, today it must be won by uniting? The answer to the demands of the Soviet state and the Roman Church is united democracy and united Protestantism. This is not strategy or cunning; it is the relentless logic of which we have already had so much to say. The democracies of the world have learned this the hard way and are moving away from independence and autonomy to unity and universal law. How much longer will the Free churches, to which the Biblical tradition is open and to whom the logic of events can never again be so clear as at this hour—how much longer will their native hue of resolution be sicklied over with a pale cast of thought? This may be a question concerning which our friends in the social sciences may be indifferent, or to which they may offer diffident answers. But to those of us who believe that God supplies us with the highest meaning of all that we know, indifference or diffidence concerning this matter at this crucial time in the world's life, may be accounted to us as faithlessness.



## Chapter IX

### God and the Market

A CULTURE is known by the institutions it creates by a process that begins with an experience and passes through the successive stages of idea, doctrine, and dogma, before it hardens into its institutional shell. During this development the power of the first and fecundating experience is lost in direct ratio to the distance that separates it from the subsequent stages. For this reason social institutions are moribund and a return to the creative experience is the only way by which rejuvenation can take place. This we have argued. Trust in the institutional concretions of experience is the faith of the conservative who lives in terror of the radical whose hilarious devotion to change makes him first an iconoclast, and ultimately the builder of new institutions.

Any culture that has advanced beyond the stage of unorganized experience has developed three types of institutions that may loosely be described as spiritual, administrative, and economic. The first deals with the effort to give order to man's religious, ethical, intellectual, and aesthetic experience. Hence art, philosophy, morality, and religion. The institutions developed to protect the achievements of these four interests often house them all together for there is a basic kinship that unites them all. Administrative institutions deal with government—order by the formulation of law, and the securing of justice. Economic institutions are the last developmental stage of man's organized experience and are concerned with making, distributing, and exchanging the things he makes with his hands.

Our definition of faith as the resolve to give the highest meaning to

all that we know, and of the Christian faith as that which makes God the highest meaning of all we know, has been discussed in detail in relation to spiritual experience as it is particularized in the organized institution of the Christian Church. It has relevance to the institutions of education and art which must be left out of this study, though the student of culture will detect clearly the effect religion has on these vital spiritual experiences. We have already given detailed consideration to the way in which religious faith impinges on government as it functions as law, preserving order, in the interests of justice. To these three great components of man's administrative chores we think that faith in God makes the difference.

[ 1 ]

What of the relation of religious faith to the things we make, acquire, own, and exchange? It is easy to say that significance is imparted to them by the fact and energy of faith, but we are not always sure what we mean. In what sense is the crop in my fields or the car in my garage significant because of God? The former stands in more obvious relation to religious faith since it is God who sends the rain and the sun and sustains the chemical balance between growth and decay. For this reason the farmer is likely to have a more vital religious faith than his slick cousin in the city. For this reason, also, he will have to recheck the measure of his piety after the dry weather has become drouth, or the rain has become a flood. His kinsman in town thinks of the water piped into his apartment or the air-conditioning unit he turns on when it is uncomfortably warm in terms rarely religious and not infrequently undevout.

The basic difficulty lies in the fact that religious faith and material objects involve a combination or relation between matter and spirit. We are given little practical help by those who have reduced solid objects to a dance of atoms. We accept the theory that the solid mass is in reality energy in motion and the corollary that spirit is hardly more or less than that; but the practical response some make is exhibited by the motor cars that line up on St. Christopher's Day in Roman Catholic Parishes for a blessing by the priest and a droplet of holy water. This, like other talismans or amulets, has no real efficacy in preventing collisions when cars are carelessly driven, but in a visual way the power of spirit is regarded as forming a protective envelope



about the leaping steel mechanism. To most of us this answers no questions.

If our faith has nothing to do with material things and if God is thought to give no significance to them, we will act with them and behave toward them in terms of a faith that leaves God out of calculation. This is what is very generally done; hence the faith characterized by the term *materialism*. Here things have their ultimate significance per se. The next step brings one to the position that things have the ultimate significance. Life organized about this faith is sure to find its values and aims in things. In so far as one desires a deity to preside over this sort of system, he will be a big thing, valuable in material terms, or he may be a man who, because he has much goods, is deified, both by the sycophant who genuflects before him and by himself, for it is easy to accept the flattery of fools as realistic wisdom and devotion.

The dilemma is noted, as we might expect, in the experience of those who have given us the great Biblical tradition of our culture. In the language of the Bible, man does not live by bread alone. Neither does he live without it. He lives by bread and word.<sup>1</sup> Here bread is clearly the symbol of the physical components of life; word is the symbol of the nonphysical or extraphysical components described above. Somehow it is necessary to achieve an effective equilibrium by which bread and word are kept in productive balance. The extreme of "bread alone" results in making man an alimentary process; the opposite—"word alone"—reduces him to an aerophyte and he will not last very long. Where a balance is maintained one sort of culture results; where it is tipped toward bread or word, another emerges. Our own secular culture is precariously tipped toward bread. How does religious faith come to grips with this? Is it not better advised to stick to its "word" component. There are some who say so. Religion, they insist, has nothing whatever to do with economics, and, having disposed of the matter thus, butter themselves another slice of bread fortified with vitamins.

[ 2 ]

We have said that the Biblical revelation confronts this dilemma. It can be more specifically analyzed. Interestingly enough it occurs very

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 4:4: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

early in the great Genesis epic of creation. In no way, therefore, can God's concern with man's things be regarded as an afterthought. Man, says the *mythos*, is a created thing—he is a living soul, formed of the dust of the ground. The uniqueness of this creature is that he was made in the image of God. To this none of his humbler cogeners can lay claim. Now this had meaning; it either was merely an academic relation, as we are fond of putting it, or it was vital and compellingly practical. That it was the latter is made manifest in the responsibility that was given this unique creature for the other forms of the life in the created world. That responsibility is given the awesome name *dominion*. Put it another way: man the unique creature was given unique responsibility.

This responsibility, which by fiat he sustained to the created order, was threefold. His obligation toward his own genus was to be fruitful and multiply. It can be pointed out that since this was a biological operation it required a minimum of rationalization—using the term as it is currently employed with respect to a manufacturing process. The threefold responsibility is put in three memorable words: *replenish, subdue, have dominion*.

Here we have the profound insight characteristic of the Biblical record focused on the problem of the relation of man—the living soul—to the living creation. He was to multiply his own species and thus continue the *Imago Dei* among the creatures of earth, but to subdue, dominate, and replenish—we put them in their logical sequence—was something else.

We have already indicated earlier in this study that man was not given dominion over himself. The omission of this authority may be taken to be the way by which the wish of man to be free was to be saved from being deflected into the spurious freedom of autonomy. Nor is there any intimation here that his credentials carried the right to subdue and have dominion over his fellow man. To be sure, at this point in the epic, there were no other humans so that problem did not arise. We wonder. The wisdom of this ancient record may be too deep for such frivolous uses. Still and all we can surely know that from the beginning, man was of nature but he was more than nature. No created thing—swimming, flying, creeping (moving)—was to outrank man. And yet man's native equipment for dominion was not in fin or fang or



wing, it was in something described as a living soul, something no creature, including himself, was ever to see, hear, or touch. Yet it was a weapon for subduing, dominating, and replenishing the earth that was short in power only of the potencies of the Creator.

This is another way of saying that not only is man *of* nature but more than nature; but that man is *of* God but not God. He will many times assume that he *is* God, and he will thereupon lose his power (soul) to subdue, and become a beast, and his subjugation and dominion will be destruction and chaos. This is the evil destiny that overtakes the man who pridefully, in the discharge of his creature duties, assumes that he is the Creator. So, in exercising the mandate given him, man has two problems—nature and himself. He does not live by bread alone, bread which symbolizes his successful subjugation of nature, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

How has he got along with his job? He has been spectacularly successful in subduing the earth. Not that he can yet stride the earthquake or rein the racing winds, but such portions of the earth as he has wished to make a habitation for himself he has subdued. It is exactly this that Toynbee says is the origin of all culture: the stubborn challenge of a niggardly earth or the threat of an epidemic has found man subduing infertility and illness so that today a demonstration can convincingly be made in support of the proposition that two billion inhabitants of the earth—how the aboriginal pair would have gasped to see it!—are potentially able to gain from the earth ample food and shelter for a healthy life. That this is not yet so is due, neither to a withdrawal of the Creator's mandate nor to the debilitation of man's power, but to man's failure to maintain the proper equilibrium between bread and word.

There may be little difference between subduing the earth and dominating it, but we think the word is not superfluous. For domination is a contamination of the process of subduing. How delightful it would have been if our solitary parents in Eden had been able to complete the job and turn it over to the boys who would in turn have eventually turned it over to us. Furthermore, we think rule (domination) calls for a refinement of powers that subjugation does not demand. Here the mind of man is called on to carry on the work his stout arm has begun. Think, for the moment, what a prodigious feat the domestication of the first horse was. Man by superior cleverness subjugated the wild creature.

Then he dominated the beast and thus gave himself six legs instead of two—when he wanted to travel, and accelerated his motion more than sixfold when dominion depended on speed. This required more than subduing the noble steed; dominion had to make him docile, amenable to the will of his master, and at home in the purlieu of the camp. It is not necessary to do more than mention the ways in which man has extended his domination over nature by the physical sciences. The dramatic coalescence of two bits of pure Uranium 235 in the air over Hiroshima produced a demonstration of man's dominion that still appalls us with its splendor and terror. Man has come close to fulfilling the mandate to dominate; there is no doubting that. He can even claim that his assiduity has won for him the status of creator. Has he not, in sober fact, created new chemico-physical elements that never before were on land or sea or in the ambient air?

## [ 3 ]

As to the matter of replenishing the earth man's record is not so impressive. It was not possible that all the forms of created life were to be completely subdued and dominated. However spectacular his success, it still falls short of absolute control. And this is all to the good. If the intimations of the present processes of subjugation and domination are credible, man's powers are moving in the direction of self-annihilation. He has become, from one point of view, too powerful for his own good; from another, too weak.

Now it is just possible that the most conspicuous failure of civilized man may be his refusal to replenish the earth he has subdued. Natural processes plenished the earth and it was assumed apparently that because in the business of subduing and dominating the earth its natural resources would be exploited and spent, man could provide insurance against ultimate poverty by replenishing. In terms of actual count, this is a matter of relatively minor importance. The animal life of the world has been largely destroyed only in those areas where civilization is concentrated in cities, and in the wilderness where man's fashioned implements have destroyed forests and plowed fields and he has watched the precious humus wash away in billions of tons into the sea. Oil reserves under the earth's punctured crust dwindle away and men hurry about the globe thumping its surface for telltale symptoms



of the hidden treasure. We are enormously prodigal with our wealth but fairly ingenious in discovering (subduing) new sources and types of it. The human being lives on proteins (here the *bread or meat* argument is joined) and the grasslands of the earth are increasingly inadequate to feed the beef that the geometrically multiplying human species must eat to live. Thus, dour prophets tell us, the struggle for dominance in the proximate future will be between those who have subdued, dominated, and stocked the steppes of Russia, the prairies of North America, and the pampas of South America. What, with the flowing of the topsoil to the sea because of the leveling of the forests, man is going to do, is a matter of concern to agronomists, ecologists, bionomists and such gentry, and whether we are breeding ourselves to death or whether there is still enough to go around must be left to them.

Our point is that man, in his zeal to subdue and dominate, has not taken seriously the need for replenishment except in the multiplication of his own species of mammal. There are, to be sure, fisheries, hatcheries, flocks, and herds that exist partly by the control of man, but the ratio of this conserving enterprise to the total activity of the consuming race is negligible. Even this must be vastly greater if man is to survive (and as this is being written we may be on our way to the third world war which will be the result, basically, of rival subduers, seeking for new resources to restock their exhausted wealth). Our economic difficulty, if we are to use the blunt and realistic language of trade, is that for all our ingenuity at subduing and dominating, we are afraid there is not enough to go around. The economic problem of society grows out of the efforts to come to terms with that fact. Let us observe the ways in which this has been tackled.

[ 4 ]

There is among us a frank avowal of the point of view that man lives by bread alone. This is, as we have said, the basis for materialism. It takes a physical need and exalts it to a moral end; we make a virtue of our necessity. This candid secularism is rationalized wholly in terms of the primary value of goods and services. All value judgments depend on the question as to whether what one does will keep the breadbox full. Thus a bread-culture considers man primarily as an eater, or as it is put in the language of modern business, a consumer. His value to

society is calculated in terms of his ability to buy and use the goods and services that are offered him. That he will be seduced into buying things he does not need because he is stupid enough to believe the fabulous advertising stories about the goods offered, is the major premise of most modern vending. A successful society, in these low terms, is one in which the standard of living is high (by arbitrary standards) even though man himself is defaced in the process. We cannot say that this development has reached its apogee—or nadir, for that matter—but we can see its direction. A bread-culture will rationalize its values in materialistic terms and will moralize its behavior in the same way. Therefore what secures bread is right, what denies or loses it is wrong. Hunger is not appeasable, nor is man's appetite for things, however absurdly stimulated, easily satisfied. The man who in his desperate need will steal a loaf, will—in the company of his fellows—steal a country to get oil. Of course for us *steal* is much too caustic a word since there are legal amenities such as ninety-nine year leases and other decorous dodges. We have no doubt, however, that other societies than ours are wickedly predatory even though they disguise their thievery with such diplomatic euphemisms as protective custody, police action, etc.

At the other extreme from a complete preoccupation with bread is the effort to desecularize life by the creation of a word-culture. This looks with mild disdain on man's need to eat, or manufacture, or trade. If these things must engage him, they must be kept at a minimum. Man does not live by bread but by word. Practically, of course, this is an impossible regimen, but it has been worked out with extraordinary results in some small and spiritually homogeneous groups—monasteries, for example. Here life is rationalized in terms of the primacy of spiritual values. Bread is allowed as a necessity but has no aesthetic or moral worth. Ascetic disciplines keep this fact constantly before the practitioner who finds the nourishment he most needs in the library.

There is something to be said for this, perhaps, and yet in its most explicit form—the monastic brotherhood—it is pursued by an odd, though predictable, fate. It ends in a denial of man's importance as a physical replenisher by the practice of celibacy; and in some orders (the Trappist notably) by the imposition of silence, the word is reduced to a minimum. We have never heard it proposed that a monastery is the



proper pattern for society—even for a word-culture—and yet it is as extreme a demonstration of what a word-society, one that found values only in the nonmaterial, would be, as is the bread-culture we have been discussing. What would be the final stage of a social group, however large or small, that was oriented about the basic values of celibacy and poverty? It could not be self-perpetuating. It might subdue a part of the earth and have dominion over it, but it could not replenish it.

## [ 5 ]

It has been pointed out earlier in this study that the pattern of our Western culture is properly described as Christian, democratic, capitalist. The original impetus for the rise of capitalism is found in the Hebrew-Christian tradition concerning the nature of man. Peter Drucker, distinguished contemporary economist, was heard in a private conversation to remark that economics was basically a matter of metaphysics, or even of theology. When he was asked, by an astonished lady, to say what this meant he pointed out that what one does in making and selling his products depends on his idea as to what his customer really is. If he's a fool, he's to be exploited; if a scoundrel, to be outsmarted; if a friend, to be served. And ultimately what one thinks about man derives from his thought about God. Hence metaphysics gives place to theology. That this bit of conversation sounded completely unreasonable, not to say absurd, is indication of the extent to which our bread-culture mind-set has taken possession of nice people. And yet what Drucker was saying was taken bodily, and consciously, out of the Hebrew-Christian revelation.

In this great tradition, which we must never allow ourselves to forget is integral to the culture of the West, man is regarded both as the image and the agent of God. In the early teaching of Christ the relation of man to bread and word was explicitly set forth. The temptation to upset the balance of nature by turning a stone into bread was resisted, not because bread is unnecessary but because power employed to do that sort of thing would have involved a usurpation of the creative prerogatives of God and upset a balance. Jesus also went beyond this in his famous insistence that there was a fellowship called the Kingdom of God which man would be wise to seek, since once this was established the correlative and indispensable values of food,

drink, and clothing would be added.<sup>2</sup> This took nothing from man's status as the image and the agent of God. It was, indeed, an effort by mitigating his anxieties concerning his physical needs (the bread component of culture) to restore his original image—a countenance, we might say, that had been marred by anxiety.

Man, according to our religious tradition, or Adam (Everyman), had the threefold duty to subdue, dominate, and replenish as God's agent. It was out of this basic stratum of wisdom that the democratic ferment of the sixteenth century exuded and, once on the surface of man's social awareness, took shape in the capitalist order wherein everyman, instead of the privileged lord, was given the right—if he had the cleverness—to make, trade, sell, or exchange goods in a manner that provided him profit. This was not only an inevitable response to a great social upheaval, it was a return to the correct exercise of the original mandate to subdue, dominate, and replenish.

It so came about that other pressures made themselves felt upon this emergent capitalism. New continents hove dimly into view beyond the prows of ships sailing on strange waters, captained by intrepid adventurers. Their sailing manifests bore the orders to lay claim to such new lands as they might find, in the name of God. They were not to forget that before they sought the gold of which they dreamed they were to be solicitous for the unredeemed souls they would encounter. But it was not easy to keep this in mind. If they were to take seriously the job of subduing and dominating the earth, they found it necessary first to subdue and dominate the sullen savages who guarded their earth treasure in the name of pagan gods.

The history of this is not proud reading. Exploration, the subjugation of alien peoples, the expropriation of wealth, and the exploitation of natural resources, these were the inevitable results of the convulsion that had shaken the social structure of Europe. It was begun by arms in the name of God; it was continued by trade in the name of a standard of living. Today we can claim, though we may have equivocal sensations as we say so, that Western, Christian, democratic, capitalist culture has subdued and dominated the world.

We are, however, uneasy with this dominion. It has become a hugely costly, not to say an uneconomical, enterprise. We dominate nature;

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 6:31-33.



consider the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb now in production. The aliens whom we have so long dominated, however benevolent our intentions and conciliatory our treaty commitments may have been, are restive. We have preached religion and democracy to them and there is therefore no way of plausibly or decently denying *them* the freedom to subdue and dominate as our ancient faith ordered *us* to do. Nor have we replenished (nor could we) the earth as we have subdued it. Hence the quest for new oil fields and new ores and new sources of physical power all over the earth. And this involves the subduing of restless natives who may not be satisfied with their modest cut in the deal or the promises that traders carry in their diplomatic brief cases. We have created a vicious circle: the capitalist economy that has subdued the earth, creates now, in the effort to maintain itself and its accomplishments, new resentments that must in turn be subdued and dominated. Elsewhere this has been called the nemesis of imperialism.

And now the colossus of the deep heartland of Eurasia rises up to dispute, not only the economic system which has brought us power and responsibilities we cannot shirk, but the religious concept we have cherished of man as God's image and agent. Man, we are told, has no image, no face. The mob is faceless! Man is not the agent of God, he is the pawn of government.

How have we reacted to this monstrous heresy? Have we not allowed the Soviet state's extreme political and social secularism to drive us more deeply into the social and political woods of our own sort of secularism? Fight fire with fire; secularism with secularism. We are afraid because Eden is corrupted. We, in our panic, have ceased being God's agent and have taken over the big seat in the front office for ourselves. We think we are God, and the issue of that folly was never more clearly foreseen than it is today by those who are not wholly blinded by the pride of culture or position.

[ 6 ]

The problem that confronts us is as easy to state as it is difficult to solve. It is simply to restore balance to a bread-word culture that has been tipped dangerously. Our bread-culture has brought the highest standard of material living to our segment of the globe and, concurrently has seen—or allowed—the lowest level of community for the

whole world. Hence the cold war. We have an economic problem to which spiritual remedies must be applied. This sounds odd to economists but the very fact that we are neither happy, nor free, nor particularly hopeful is indication enough that we are spiritually debilitated. Engulfed as we are in secularist (bread-culture) concerns, we see its nemesis but have not the wit or courage to break out of the vicious circle that moves more and more with the speed of a vortex.

The expedients proposed by those whose faith is in a meaning of things that gets no higher than the operation of economic laws will make proposals that operate on a level no higher than that. They will not create *de novo* a new system. Systems, we have endlessly said, are created by the social dynamics of experience. Where such systems as socialism, syndicalism, co-operatives, etc., have taken hold of a society it is not through the inspired wisdom of some isolated genius, but because of the flint-hard logic of events.

Our hope certainly lies in this direction since man, once the experience of subduing and dominating becomes as lust in his blood, and ceasing to be a mandate of God, has become already the accomplice of his pride, is not within reach of the sort of wisdom that stops, analyzes, and makes radical change. Events, therefore, can exert pressure that ideas can never command. And there is evidence that this is taking place. The economists are getting morally concerned. In *Time*<sup>3</sup> there appeared what was captioned "A Capitalist Manifesto." "'Labor,' " it said, "'is not merely a commodity to be bought and sold, used and discarded. . . . Even if men are well fed, clothed and housed, it will not be enough. . . . [Man] must feel that he is more than an automaton, a cog in a wheel.' In these forceful phrases last week, 48 business, labor and religious leaders issued what might well be called a Capitalist Manifesto. Not bread alone: the root of labor's past unrest . . . was management's own failure to 'meet the needs of man's moral and social nature.'" The report went on to quote other significant phrases. "Management must recognize the right to a job at a 'moral wage.' Such things as pensions and annual wages were desirable from the psychological and ethical points of view."

The story clearly indicated that the inspiration for this meeting was "the threat of another depression." One has no wish to be captious

<sup>3</sup> February 13, 1950, pp. 79-80.



about what was clearly a solemn effort to face up to an unpleasant prospect, but we do not believe that management—any sort of management—can meet the needs of man's moral nature. Nor are we particularly impressed by the recognition that from the psychological and ethical points of view, certain things were *desirable*. The use of that word gives away the superficial understanding these gentlemen had of the ethical issues involved. So long as ethical practices are merely desirable, nobody is going to be very excited about behaving circumspectly. The difficulty is that unethical practices are often desirable too. Ethical compulsions do not depend primarily on their desirability. They compel whether they are desirable or distasteful.

This is only another way of saying that the solution to the world's economic problem is a matter for religion to take hold of. The solutions of a low faith, however creditable may be its effort to achieve moral wages and such like things, are capricious and illusory. It is God who makes the difference.

Christian faith is the resolve that God gives the highest meaning to all that we know. Included within its orbit of interest and obligation is man's problem of bringing bread and word into a harmonious and mutually helpful relation. In order to do this it will not lose sight of the fact that man is still the image and the agent of God in His created universe. If man exalts himself to the place of God on the one hand, or uses his power and his agency to deface the image of God in himself or his brother, he is under moral judgment. That is the depth the self-probings of management failed to reach. It is an ethical judgment within the framework of a profound religion.

Thus all economic systems and the systems within the systems will be constantly subject to the moral judgments of religious faith—not to the fear of a depression. And the discovery will be made that any system, or parts of it, are right when they enable man to maintain the image of God in himself and to exercise his commission as the agent of God. In the language of the Biblical record, that system is good—and therefore enduring by the grace of God—that enables Adam (Everyman) to be increasingly Godlike in character (image) and in his use of the earth. For man to subdue and hold dominion over the earth as if it were his own is usurpation and folly. Man cannot own the earth! What fact is more elemental or more stupidly disputed?

In order for this sort of thing to take place the nature of God as it is exhibited in community must be made explicit. Here again we encounter our fourfold idea of all-inclusiveness, dynamism, cohesion, and love. It is these four factors in community that can alone mitigate the errors of modern capitalism or restore the imbalance between bread and word in our culture. It needs no argument to establish the fact that the tendency of capitalist enterprise as now practiced is not in the direction, either of all-inclusiveness or cohesion. Dynamic it has, both psychologically in the seductiveness of things and the evocation of pride in the possession of things, and pragmatically in the energies that are implicit in money power. But capitalism cannot be all-inclusive for the simple reason that only those who have capital are capitalists. This is no diatribe; it is description. The result is that there arises a capitalist class. Over against it is the class that has no money capital—only skill or time or labor to invest for such return as it can win. Here there is less power, or sense of power, hence the necessity to unite in order to make a display of power. This is, of course, the beginning of class struggle and the end of social cohesion. And so long as class divisions convulse the social order, love will either disappear as a moral force or retreat to the cosy and protected precincts of romance.

## [ 7 ]

Is it too much to say that here again as elsewhere we see the stern logic of events forcing idea and action where neither had been thought likely to be encountered? One magazine article does not make an economic revolution, and yet from an area of significant action where the logic of events has caused exciting changes in world thought and order, interesting testimony comes. The United Nations is, as we have observed elsewhere, the inescapable response of nations to the folly and futility of independence and autonomy, those twin imitations of freedom and enemies of community. In the *United Nations World Magazine*<sup>4</sup> a brief editorial by Louis Dolivet bears the title: "A Three Day Armistice in the Cold War." He begins:

For three days, I watched with jubilation in my heart the most constructive meeting in the history of the United Nations. The meeting opened under the cold and rather heavy-handed title of Technical Assistance Con-

<sup>4</sup> July, 1950, Vol. 4, No. 7, p. 4.



ference of the United Nations. It was a great relief to witness a gathering of representatives of fifty countries in which there were no recriminations, no demands for new territories, no veiled or open threats. Instead delegate after delegate rose to announce the contribution of his country to the first international program designed to alleviate, and eventually end, economic misery everywhere in the world. . . . It was the first great unanimous decision. . . . everyone present realized that here was the beginning of a new era. . . . Agencies to improve living standards to raise the educational level, to plan new homes and roads, to heal sickness and to fertilize deserts in under-developed territories.

("Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it.")

At the close of the Conference, [when] Herman Santa Cruz of Chile rose to make his great concluding address, and announced that a new human concept—*that of collective economic security*—was being born. . . . While he spoke, I could already see before my eyes fresh water gushing through the deserts of Arabia, gigantic dams harnessing endless quantities of energy and putting them to the service of man, I could see the goods of earth being traded all over a healthy world.

These were days of armistice. For three days I was no longer in the age of the cold war. . . .

Why? Because he was in the age of the Economic Community of all mankind.

Was this great experiment a new human concept? In the orthodox books of economics perhaps; but to those who have known an older record, it was an old idea. Perhaps this idea, which, however it may be claimed as the invention of economists, is essentially a religious one, having had its introduction to our times under the sedate aegis of the United Nations, will find its way into national economies, and even into the organized life of small economic units. It is worth working for, for it is long overdue. How long? Well; how long has it been since Eden?

## *Chapter X*

### God and Love

OUR discussions in the last five chapters have gathered about the social nucleus in the effort to understand the ways in which religion, as represented in the faith of Hebrew-Christian culture, exerts its influence for order, in terms of community. In Chapter V we were concerned to study the family as the locus, in embryo, of those vital experiences which mature ultimately in the school, the court, and the market. Of these, the court, or more specifically law and government as they are symbolized by the institutions of legal interpretation and control, and the economic order as it is represented by the contest between the bread and word elements of culture, have been given detailed consideration.

It is necessary to our survey to return at this point to the family. Its role in human experience is not exhausted by its function as the seminary of school, court, and market. There are more subtle influences that it imposes, influences more profound and permanent in the determination of character, influences that are touched and vitalized by one's faith. One might even claim that they are determinative of the ultimate destiny of the race since they deal with the ultimate issues of the individual soul. Three of these are love, discipline, and suffering. The first of these is representative of the expanding and liberating elements in experience; the second points up the limits and penalties that growing life encounters; and the third, superficially regarded, is thought to be the denial of the first and the unreasonable excess of the second. Love has had no trouble getting along with religious faith, and discipline has been endured as concomitant of its moral aspect. Suffering,



however, has been an affront to faith; it has supplied its most stubborn contradiction. Today, as it is more widespread in the world than ever before, it is also the most stubborn contradiction to the secularist dream of progress. Suffering has become so commonplace that we have developed an insensitivity to it largely because to face up to it is likely to reduce our concern to a morbid interest in it or an involuntary recoil from it. If this is so, and we see no compelling reason to deny it, then this is something concerning which religion must always speak, and speak in terms that every generation of sufferers can hear—if not always understand or accept. And it is something that is encountered first within the family unit.

## [ 1 ]

Our attention therefore will turn to these matters, and since love is the first experience to which the child is introduced in the family, we will consider it first.

There should be no difficulty in understanding what the word means since it is as much used a piece of our verbal currency as almost any other. And yet it is, in fact, very generally misunderstood or understood in terms, by different people, that seem almost contradictory. Here one observes the difference that one's faith (recall our definition) makes. To the pure naturalist love means one thing; to the saint in mystic contemplation it means something else. To the adolescent, to the young mother, to the philanderer, to the psychotic, love has partial and particular meanings, and unless they are properly understood, communication on the subject is confusing if not altogether impossible. We shall try to separate some of these so that we may see them both in isolation and perspective.

The naturalist, no matter how passionately he may love his wife, will, if he is honest with his presuppositions (or his faith), give her an explanation of his ardor in properly academic terms. He may be a biologist who sees love as a chemical process. If so, his interest will begin with the unborn baby that is to excite maternal affection and absorb it. The fetus grows by the infusion of chemical properties into the conjoined cells in the mother, and bone, tissue, blood, develop by chemical reactions. And when the baby is born and nuzzles its mother's warm, fragrant nipple, it is still absorbing into its hungry, growing body the

chemical elements that were supplied in the placenta before it was born.

To be sure, in order that there should be a baby there was the secretion of the endocrine glands in the parents that made possible and delightful the mating ritual. And before this there was the premarital coquetry and command that found the moonlight a silver suffusion devised to incite and obscure the play of love, and in the deeper darkness of the starlit night an invitation to daring. Yet all of this is chemistry or conditioned reflex. The sigh of the lover and the nuptial dance of the heath cock are one and the same. The main difference is that for the human being it is a year-round process and for the fowl it is seasonal and a form of combat.

Picking up this chemical explanation of love the sociologist employs it to explain the nuclei that are its result. He sees the sow with a litter in less romantic terms than a madonna and child, but their utility is one and the same. Because young pigs and human infants are helpless at birth, they must be kept close to their mothers. Suckling is therefore a social utility. If there is a sense of kindred in the human family that is denied the pigs, this is a fiction created out of necessity. Pigs get along without it. So would human beings if they were not addicted to romantic nonsense about the importance of the family. This is proved, we are told, by studying primitive or savage families.

To the sociologist's view, aided and confirmed by the anthropologist, we have the psychological version of love. It is basically very important, definitive, indeed, for it conditions the psyche in patterns that are never wholly or significantly altered. At first the love of the infant is responsive orally and anally to the mother's attentions. Later it becomes touched with jealousy if there are other children in the family or with hostility toward others in the neighborhood. Subsequently it becomes self-centered in the adolescent and sheer egocentrism in the adult though it will always seek to justify its pretensions in terms of love that flatters it. Yet even its most unselfish act is pure egotism. Thus the whole process from the private breast to public benevolence is egoism, rationalized in terms of a sentiment that is produced by glandular activity. Social cohesion is a by-product of these activities and man has made use of it to protect himself, first from attack by beasts more powerful than he and then from others of his own sort who want to be more powerful. But in the final analysis, society is an accident



of the nature of the human animal, and if culture has developed from it, it is only a passing phase of man and will survive or perish only in terms of biological or social or psychological factors. As this is being written it seems likely that the cohesion supplied by these factors is breaking up and we are on the way to a global return to glands and reflexes as the basis for behavior, and that means a return to the jungle, if indeed there will be left a jungle to which man can return.

We do not scoff at all this. However it is to be explained there is nobility in human behavior, and man protects his kin and talks sincerely about brotherly love and the relative thickness of blood and water in the human bonds. To be sure, he destroys his species with a cunning and ferocity no lesser animal can muster but he will explain that he did this to protect his nearby brothers from the threat of his far-off brethren.

[ 2 ]

What we seek then in such understandings of love are the aims that they seem to have for those who describe them thus. Some will say love has no aim, but such desperation is relatively rare. There are three types of love, and each seems to have its own particular aim and devices for achieving it. Manifestly domestic love is the first in order of appearance. It is purely instinctive. The sense of well-being and security that envelops the infant-in-arms is an animal satisfaction that is lost at once when some physical experience—say cold or wet—interrupts it. The puppy or kitten curled into a sleeping ball has quite the same unconscious sense. Similar is the sensation of the mother as she suckles her child. The sensations of the warm little mouth tugging at the breast create physical euphoria and induce relaxation and repose, if other physical surroundings are equally satisfying. The aim, unconscious of course, is the perpetuation of the species by surrounding the newly-born with the protection it immediately needs. Protection is its primary device and whether it be exhibited in the defensive fury of the mother or the nucleation of the family in herd, burrow, or hut, protection of the young is its basic instinctual drive.

This domestic love passes not only from mother to child; it exists normally between brother and sister, litter mate, and within the larger dimensions of the blood tribe. This is soon put to the test. The more

primitive the tribe the quicker the dependence on the group is transmuted into shifting for oneself. In our highly sophisticated culture there tends to be an almost limitless sense of belonging and mutual interdependence in the family unit. All this serves well the purpose of perpetuating the species.

[ 3 ]

Romantic love comes next. This is a phenomenon peculiar to Western society. Romantic love was born somewhere about the twelfth century. The twentieth century is likely to witness its disappearance. Ancient times saw woman the object of man's sexual desires, or his wife, or the mother and domestic slave of his children and himself. The complicated psychological love-play that was to dominate the thinking and struggles of Western man and that was to possess him more obsessively than any other instinct, including survival, arose from the depths of a newly emerging civilization in which were cross-fertilized Moorish philosophy, nascent art forms in literature, music, and drama, and the all-pervading—and somewhat perverted—ideals of the Christian religion of the era.

Romantic love was not as charming an experience as we have thought from the songs of troubadours and poets. It was a torture, exquisite and seductive, but nonetheless sheer torment. Andreas Capellanus wrote in 1180: "Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex." Love was a sickness. The old English lyric was giving a diagnosis, not expressing a clever or coy mood when it said:

I attempt from love's sickness to fly in vain  
Since I am myself my own fever and pain.

Thus the romantic sensation was exaggerated by absence. To be away from the beloved was a rapture, sought deliberately sometimes, but always felt. To attain it was, oddly, to lose it. The myth of Tristram and Iseult presents the tragic but logical issue of this torture when obstacles, both physical and psychological, are so insuperable that death alone can assuage it. Tristram, who would take his beloved in his arms, lays his sword between them as the symbol of their eternal severance.

This produced superb literature and art and in some profound



respects it touched very deep levels of the meaning of love as it is conceived by religion. Yet it could not survive ultimately the dynamics of a changing society. Today, due to the psychology of depth and the achievement of what is called the equality of the sexes, romantic love has lost its vitality and *raison d'être*. Now that men and women are regarded as equal and, except physically, identical, there is no longer room for the agonies of self-torture that the lovelorn male and the inaccessible but fluttery female once indulged.

It is not our purpose to discuss here the moral implications of this. Or its significance, which for our contemporary world, is very great. Let it suffice for the moment to point out that the aim of romantic love was the possession of the beloved. Even the flight from her bower was designed to woo her. Tristram's sword was an invitation to defiance that would be rewarded by the greater ecstasy of illicit passionate delight once the sword was put away, or its edge ignored. The lingering efforts to keep alive this experience by Hollywood may be good or bad in terms of the social significance of the passing of romantic love. Indeed the sophisticated treatment of sex by novel and play and the scientific treatment of it by sociologists, are to be judged as good or bad solely in terms of one's basic faith; i.e., the over-all concept that gives meaning and value to all that we know. So long as we have active glands we will go through an experience that we will call falling in love, but the great era of romantic love is gone. Possession of the beloved, as the great aim of the romantic experience, will be explained, in all likelihood, in terms that would have been both dull and repugnant to the swooning ladies and kneeling swains of the nineteenth century.

[ 4 ]

There is another sort of love that is, in one way or another, the experience of everyone. It may be designated *ethical love*. The will-to-good is the way it is put by moralists. How deeply this is ingrained in the human spirit and whether or not it is cultivated or congenital is of no very great importance here. There may be good reasons for assuming that it is a spiritual endowment, that it is the counterweight to the will-to-evil in man's soul. At this point it serves our purpose to point out that in the naturalistic view love, so understood, is purely utilitarian and may be adequately understood without the esoteric

element of religion. Unless, of course, religion is in itself a purely utilitarian fact of experience.

And here again the will-to-good aims at the preservation of the species. In this respect its purpose is identical with domestic and romantic love, seen through the eyes of the naturalist. It is simply good sense to act toward one's fellows with good will. Honesty is the best policy. So is consideration of others. So are courtesy and compassion and pity—and love. Marcus Aurelius knew this: "Let this truth be present to thee in the excitement of anger, that to be moved by passion is not manly, but that mildness and gentleness, as they are more agreeable to human nature, so also they are more manly; and he who possesses these qualities possesses strength, nerves, and courage, and not the man who is subject to fits of passion, and discontent."<sup>1</sup> So also did Lao-tse in the sixth century B.C. "I would return good for good; I would also return good for evil. I would meet trust with trust; I would likewise meet suspicion with confidence."

Not only is the species to be preserved by this method since the security of one depends upon the security of all; the method of achieving ethical love is wholly empirical. Since man cannot live in isolation or hostility, it is the part of practical good sense to organize his life so that individual and social experience shall contribute the maximum aid, both to survival and well-being. This manifestation of love is shorn of romantic connotations. One need not even regard one's fellows as members of a universal domestic menage. But one must, in the interests of survival and at the behest therefore of elemental prudence, love his fellow man in terms of wishing him well.

[ 5 ]

The summary that has been given of these three common understandings of love is, so far as it goes, altogether accurate. Mother-and-child love are chemical, romantic love is endocrinological, and the will-to-good is prudential. It is not easy for us to understand how life, analyzed in practical individual and social experience, could have existed outside this three-sided pattern. Certain it is that a suspension of any one of these elements—chemistry, secretion, prudence—means

<sup>1</sup> *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius.*



the end of life or, as we have put it, the defeat of the aim of love—the preservation of the species.

Our dissent here is not from what is said by the naturalist but from the claim that the concept of love is fully rounded out when put in his terms alone. In other words, religious faith does not understand love in quite so simple a fashion. There ought to be a higher level on which love may be understood. What keeps man from being nothing more than a high-class animal if love is nothing more than what the naturalist says it is? Furthermore, the assumption back of such a low estimate of love is that self-preservation is nature's first law and if love can help out in the enterprise it has completely discharged its usefulness. But nature's first law is not the preservation of the species by the species itself. Since this is true regarding life and its aims, a purely scientific explanation is incomplete and needs the support of a higher invention. This will be a support, not a contradiction, and it can be accepted, we believe, without doing violence to any of the data or deductions of natural science.

This plus-component, for such it is, is supplied by the faith that God provides the highest explanation of all that we know. Therefore we must undertake to find out what love means to God. Is it a means to the preservation of species by way of methods that are somehow analogous to the natural processes observed on the human level? Let us agree that this is not an easy question to answer if for no other reason than that we cannot think of God except in terms of human experience within timespace. This may throw us off balance at the start or deflect us from proper or plausible inferences.

God, as we have said, is all-inclusive, dynamic, cohesive, loving. Taking our start from that invention of faith, and assuming that God has the experience of loving, why does He love? Is it in the interests of self-preservation? Are the methods He employs designed to preserve species? From one point of view such questions are meaningless since if God is eternal and absolute—as it is customarily put—self-preservation is implicit in His nature. Only that which is self-sustaining, self-sufficient, and self-evident can be absolute and eternal.

At the same time, however, we confront in the Biblical revelation, an understanding of the meaning of God that is so profound as to be sometimes mistaken for naïveté. We have pointed out that psychology

interprets love in terms of egoism. Despite indications in the Biblical record that men conceived God in egoistic terms—He was jealous, vengeful, spectacular—we do not find it easy to think of Him as the Great Egotist. This is anthropomorphism, to be sure, but the ancient seers saw a profound truth behind the anthropomorphic screen. It was that God was the Self-giving One. Here was the direct opposite of egotism.

Very often this concept was obscured by the inescapable inclination to present God in terms of human activity. He was thought to have experiences analogous, more or less, to human love as it is expressed in its domestic, romantic, and ethical phases. Was there not a divine orgasm at creation? Did He not love His children with everlasting love? Is there not a family on earth that derives its name from a divine Parent? Does He not will the good of all—that not even the least of His little ones should perish? These are categories easy for us to understand and are therefore natural for our use. And yet they must not be allowed to veil the Eternal Face whereon are discerned the lineaments of a love that give it infinite dimensions.

God is the Self-giving One: that is the most profound concept of deity that has taken shape in the human mind. The aim of His action not being self-preservation, it must be creation, and the method of creation must be by self-giving. The profundity of this invention can be readily seen by setting it alongside lesser faiths—both the religious, in which God is the Great Taker or Destroyer, or the secular, in which nature heedlessly produces chemical reactions that have no meaning beyond themselves.

If God is all-inclusive, then the act of creation is always an act of self-denial. For this reason also, the created thing is a fragment, so to speak, of God. To be sure, this raises as many questions as it answers. Is this not true, however, of all profound insights? If God is dynamic, His power is available for the infinite and continuing processes of creation; if He is cohesive, all His creative actions are designed to unite and integrate life, rather than to sunder and scatter it. And if He is loving?—this is what love must mean to Him.

Thus conceived we are not concerned with a God who is confined to the expressions of love that are the utilities of His human children. We may use them on the human level, for men are men and not God.



But the highest human experience is that of creativity, whether it be expressed in a child, a family, or a generous act, and life partakes of the essence of love when it is creative. Hence the mother's love for her baby, the artist's love for his painting, the saint's love for the wretch to whom he has given a cup of cold water. God, who in a manner of speaking is creative-love, can, in ways beyond our understanding, use creatively, in pursuance of His aim, the dark experiences of human life—discipline, pain, and death, which to the human mind seem to nullify both the impulse of love and the success of creation.

## [ 6 ]

It makes a difference what one hypothecates as the highest meaning to all that one knows. This is faith. Love, the experience that comes first to the child within the security of the mother's arms, becomes within the context of faith in God, the energy of creation. Does this make any difference?

There is a danger that we think threatens love all along the line if it is conceived in no more lofty terms than those supplied by naturalism. If, for example, self-preservation—and the preservation of the species, which is simply the physical extension to infinity of the ego-desire (in so far as infinity is comprehensible)—is the aim of love, love becomes pure egoism and its manifestations egotistic. Love, that is to say, becomes self-love. Now it is altogether impossible to sunder one's acts from oneself and for this reason we cannot altogether escape the pitfalls of egoism. At the same time we can at least confront the fact that all creative action is, in effect, the limitation of the ego. When, in the language of the Genesis *mythos*, God decided to make man in His image He had to deny Himself to the degree that creating man involved. And, paradoxically, in the act of creation, He enhanced His ego. This is exactly what Jesus meant—though the connection is rarely seen—when he said that the man who saves his ego loses it and the man who loses it, finds it.

It is not difficult to see how love, conceived in purely naturalistic terms, can be corrupted by egotism. The vulgarization of romantic love has come about by just that process. Before the rise of romantic love in the twelfth century, mating was left to nature and at times and in various ways nature, no doubt, allowed its degradation. But when love

became a contrived agony and separation from the beloved became the essence of romantic ecstasy, the ego was flattering itself, both by its romantic asceticism and indulgence. Poetry, gay clothes, entertainment, the arts of coquetry, imitation, feigned disdain or pain were elaborated projections of the ego. The maid who fled her pursuer thought herself to be the most desirable of all pursued objects; the swain who sought her thought his success in capturing her the only possible balm for his wounded heart.

It can be argued<sup>2</sup> that feminine egotism as expressed in woman's desire to be more and more independent of her natural vocation—motherhood—and, inferentially, more like the male, has been the result of egotistic aims and, concurrently, the cause of the emotional insecurity in which she and her world are currently plunged. There is much creative good sense in planned parenthood but it can be as surely corrupted by the egotism of the parent who boasts he has kept his family down to an economical size, as by the boast of the overbred family that all they have is their kids.

Even ethical love—the will-to-good—is corrupted by the faith that reaches no higher than the level of a desire for mutual security. Few things are more distasteful than the ostentatious do-gooder who calculates every act of generosity in terms of the step-up it gives his ego-pressure. This is not only an individual problem; it is equally a social one. What is more obvious than the self-righteous insistence of white people that colored people ought to have equal opportunities when what is actually meant is a bargain that will give economic opportunities in exchange for social disabilities. This is group-egotism of the commonest sort and not infrequently it describes itself in the lilting syllables of a phrase about the brotherhood of man.

It is the concession that naturalism makes to the ego that opens the way for the corruption of domestic, romantic, and ethical love. Of course, the ego itself puzzles the naturalist who cannot quite make out what it is. It too may be chemically secreted. If so there is nothing that can be done about it. As soon try to interrupt the flow of adrenalin into the bloodstream whenever the ego—whatever it is—is frightened. In the language of religion, such love finds its source, its intentions, and its methods in self, not in God. Love therefore becomes egotism or self-

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Agnes E. Meyer, "Women Aren't Men," *The Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1950.



love, and self-love is idolatry, and idolatry is sin. It is only a religious concept that can catch hold of the dilemma that this creates.

When love, whatever its manifestation on the human level, is converted to a faith that makes God the highest meaning of all that we know, what happens? There is a phrase familiar to those who know the Biblical tradition: "The Love of Christ constraineth us" (II Corinthians 5:14-15). What does that mean? That it is not simply a dogmatic assertion tossed off by Paul in the course of a letter is supported by the less familiar words that follow. "Because," he goes on, "we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves." This has certain theological significance that is important in other connections. Here it suggests to us the heart of the meaning of love as it is contained within the faith of those who find in God the highest meaning of all that they know. This is fairly simple. It says that Christ's love was expressed in dying for others. This was the ultimate in self-giving and the polar opposite of egotism. That exemplification, therefore, lays constraints on those who love him. Constraint is a strong word. It means, in this context, that those who are willing to exemplify love in the same way find themselves stoutly inhibited; to such a degree indeed that they "should no longer live unto themselves." This, in ideal terms, is what happens when love is subsumed under the Christian aegis.

What happens practically? In the first place the ideal, if not the impetus of all living, moves from the pivot of self-preservation or preservation of the species, to creativity as an aim. Of course, there is a sense in which all the processes of life that preserve it can be described also as creative. Anabolism is the term which designates the building-up processes that keep all structure vital. This is a chemical action and in so far as it creates new cells, it is creative. Similarly every birth is a creation. For this reason it cannot be said that there is a physical change from preservation to creation by means of a consciously appropriated idea. Yet it is clear that self-preservation, whether of the self or of the species, is inescapably ego-centered, while creativity can be, and often is, freed of the corruption of selfishness. This is true of great art even though a great artistic achievement also satisfies the ego-hunger of the artist. The difference, therefore, between great and inferior art is likely to lie in the extent to which the exercise of genius is concentrated in the

former case in the painting, the statue, the poem, the symphony; and in the latter in the concern of the artificer to enhance his reputation. In so far as living is an art, this is true. Philanthropy, said Jesus, becomes *egotism* when the left hand knows what the right hand is doing.

Thus domestic love can be more than the concomitant of biochemistry. Mrs. Meyer asks that women be called "to the psychic defense and the moral rejuvenation of our society." "Woman," she concludes, "represents the focal point of time and eternity and the perpetual triumph of life over death." This is not the language of the natural sciences, accurately as they may state their case. It is the language of dedication, which is a spiritual thing. It asks that love, in its domestic manifestation, be voluntarily made an experience of creation. Mrs. Meyer's concern is urgent: "Now that destruction threatens us from within and without woman's role in society is again recognized as the fundamental, essential, and vital one that it has always been." That sort of thing is not likely to be said by one whose faith finds explanations of domestic love in nothing more dramatic than hormones and chemical reactions.

If domestic love is transmuted from self-preservation to creativity by faith in God, romantic love may also experience change. There can surely be nothing wrong with the wholesome passions of young folk in love, but it requires no lengthy comment to prove that they have been exploited in our times to so dangerous a degree by the entertainment business that love-play has lost the delicacy of privacy and sex has become a naked goddess on a Hollywood shrine. A girl in shorts and a boy with hair on his chest squeeze hands suggestively before her. Little wonder romantic love is dying. It is gorged to surfeit. What once was gay is now garish, what was once coy is now crude.

This is the sour fruit of egoism in romance which both parties—and often the sinister third party—have tasted. One need not go back to an age of innocence to find a tastier fruit; one needs only to set this vital erotic experience within the framework of a faith that can keep it sweet. To read the marriage ceremony is to have refreshed in the mind the central ideas that religious faith has for generations pronounced over wedded lovers. This takes nothing away from normal glandular excitation; it adds to the whole ritual of romance a motivation and a method that can save it from sordidness and surfeit.



Similarly also ethical love. We have mentioned how the will-to-good is soiled by the meddling hands of egotism. There is, in all candor, an imperative to treat one's neighbor well, lest he treat one ill. But a will-to-good that gets no higher than prudence is hardly what it calls itself. It is rather a will-to-safety. And oftener than we sometimes think, ethical love demands of us a will-to-danger in order to perform its duty. It is here that the ancient revelation is unambiguous in its emphasis. Nothing is more clear than the fact that the creating God who had given of Himself in creation expected His created sons to do the same to keep creation going. What else does loving one's neighbor as oneself mean? This makes no excision of the ego a condition for ethical love. That is impossible. It asks only that one's self regard never be allowed to overtop one's regard for one's fellows. That is difficult enough, in all conscience; but how else is the corruption of the ego to be counteracted?

## [ 7 ]

If, therefore, love be set within the framework of religious faith it can become for man the most godlike of experiences. To be like God is the aim of saintliness; to claim to be God is the sin of the fool. But one can enter somewhat into the experience of creativity without presumption. Who has looked at his first-born for the first time without sharing the exquisite joy of creativity? Cannot falling in love be set within the same infinite dimensions? And why should not every act of compassion, helpfulness, and simple ministry to human need, carry with it the sense of its godlike essence?

Added to this is the exciting auxiliary factor of play. Play is love's relaxation. One's love of nature expresses itself in the rhythms of the dance; of one's friends in the exchanges and momentary rivalries of the game; of one's child in the bended dignity of imitation and baby-talk; of one's spouse in the intimacies of sex-play. Here are aspects of play that are being increasingly lost by having been turned over to those who play for us. Have we not largely forgot that play is a cohesive force; that those who play together will not fight? We are strangely reluctant to think of God as having playful moods but the Greeks were not. Why should we not say that the experience of love introduces us not only to the relaxation of play with our fellows, but

also with God? Surely there is no impiety here, or if there is it is because play, as the auxiliary of love, has been forgotten or corrupted.

One cannot escape, in this connection, the contiguous fact that play, which is the relaxation of love, is also the prelude to peace. Love, by play, brings peace. Here peace is a sense of fullness through the apprehension of the divine will.

Brother, the quality of love doth quiet  
Our will, and make us long for that thing only  
Which here we have; no other thirst it wakens.<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to think of a measure of spiritual achievement more complete than this: love, play, peace. It is spiritual not in the sense, however, of being detached from what seem to be more practical matters. It would not be hard to point out critical points in our unloving, desperately tense, and unpeaceful world where these three collateral experiences, if sought and seized, could bring peace. The saints have discovered this in solitude; the world must discover it, or destroy itself in its hate, its tumultuous striving, and its angry unrest.

And finally, does not such a concept of love as is possible within the framework of religion carry with it the sense of belonging in a new way to a new spiritual dimension of the universe? This brings us back again to the concept of community that has found its place in all of these studies. Surely the basis of community is love; surely also the fulfillment of love—so conceived—is found in community.

Alan Paton, author of the novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*, in a brief article in *The Christian Century* of March 8, 1950, under the caption "Toward a Spiritual Community" had this to say, in part:

It is a well known fact that when a powerful magnet is brought near to a haphazard assemblage of iron filings, they will, if they are free to move, arrange themselves immediately in the field of its attraction. They take upon themselves a pattern whose unity and direction are clearly discernible. . . .

This is a picture of the human world. For us also there is a pattern into which we may move under the influence of a great attraction, a pattern

<sup>3</sup> Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, "Paradiso," Canto III.



whose unity and direction are dimly apprehended by us, but whose realization consistently eludes us. . . .

If the whole world of men could respond to the great attraction there would be created the spiritual community that we have as yet but dimly apprehended. . . .

Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit (love?) saith the Lord. And this spirit can only fill the world, and bring to an end this half-century of terror and lostness, when men yield themselves to the field of its attraction. This obedience is man's active task by which he collaborates with the divine and strengthens that spiritual community which is the servant of its purposes.

"And we ourselves know and we confide in the love which God has for us" I John 4:16 [Weymouth].

## *Chapter XI*

### God and Limitation

WE HAVE said that the family is the unit within which the individual first encounters those embryonic experiences which determine in large degree what he is to be when he has achieved what we loosely call maturity. Love is the first of these experiences, and whether considered as domestic, romantic, or ethical, is determinative of much of what happens as the child grows. The process of maturation is considered from the strictly scientific viewpoint as adaptation to natural laws for the purposes of survival and if these ends are realized, love is a success. From the standpoint of religious faith, however, survival is a relatively low end and even if achieved still leaves the human soul in a spiritual wilderness, lonely and vagabond until it can find its fulfillment in God and the community.

#### [ 1 ]

The second encounter with which the infant must come to terms is that of restraint or limitation. In a very realistic way this introduces the vast problem of evil as it touches human experience. The subtleties of graduation between so simple an experience as mild disappointment and crushing defeat tend to shield their essential identity, an identity that can be described as limitation. It is this that appears to be the direct opposite or even the negation of the love experience which, as has been pointed out, moves all the way from the instinctive sense of repletion at the mother's breast, to the relaxation of play and the repose of peace. Anything that reduces or limits the quality we call love must therefore be regarded as an evil thing. At the same time it



is obvious that limitation can be seen as the defense of love, as a protection against its misuse, or, in other words, as saving love from becoming limitation or evil in itself. This problem as it is created by the corruption of love by egocentricity has already been discussed together with the way in which faith in God supplies the necessary safeguard against egotism. Here clearly faith in God is a form of restraint, and if limitation is per se an evil, faith is an evil.

It is this that makes necessary a discussion of the relation between faith and evil. It is also what helps to make such a discussion difficult. In the final analysis there can be no ultimate rationalization of evil. It is forever alien to man's ideal existence and its intrusion brings not only discomfort but disbelief. Evil cannot be understood except as a personal experience; it is *my* ego that is annoyed or crushed. To a limited degree I may enter vicariously into the evil that afflicts another but this even at its deepest level, is shallow and transient and if allowed too long becomes a personal evil that I must deal with in terms of my own ego-comfort.

Evil as it is related to God defies our understanding because we are not God. It is hypothetically possible that the nature of God provides for all the types of experience that on the human level are called evil without involving Him in evil. In other words, what to man is evil may not be evil to God. When we confront this, we generally reject it as morally insufferable; it seems to involve the moral universe in contradiction. So we say God suffers as we do. This rights the moral balances, we think, but it does not settle the problem of evil. It would seem that man's essential egoism makes it impossible for him to conceive of God in such terms as would make what is to man odious a delight to God. The very fact that such statements affront us is confirmation that man's thoughts are not God's thoughts, whether we like it or not. This is the ultimate proof, if any were needed, of the finiteness of the human mind. All our efforts to construct a universe of ideas in which evil is relevant, intelligible, or even good are destined to disappointment for the primary reason that man cannot fit evil into a rational order. We must assume, if it is important enough for us, that the rationalizations of God concerning what the mind of man regards as evil are quite beyond us. Not beyond Him, for we have insisted all along that God is all-inclusive and that must make room for the experiences we call

"the dark side of life," which, we have been saying, may for Him be ineffably bright despite its grim opacity to the human eye.

[ 2 ]

Limitation, discipline, evil—these are more or less cognate and in our discussion they will be used thus. We have observed that limitation is a human experience second only to love in priority of sequence and importance. What is the meaning of discipline in general on the level of nature?

There are principles about which life is organized. In the lesser creatures they are instinctual, supplied through reflexive responses to excitation of various sorts, and are developed by the crude disciplines observed in some creatures. The mother bear is seen to slap her cub for the infraction of some imagined ursine code. She also teaches him to fish, as the mother grouse instructs her chicks to lie still in the presence of danger until flight is safe. These are what we call the rules of survival. The individual creature is protected by them and the species is continued.

Thus we have what is generally called natural law, a formalization of what is observed to be the way in which nature operates. In inorganic nature it operates to preserve the integrity of the unit, be it a spinning planet or an exploding atom. In organic nature these interrelationships are described with such exactness that a product can be predicted by a mathematical formula before any of the constituent elements are put together to produce it. In the relations of chemistry and physics to the life processes we see what is the creative meeting of inorganic and organic in a living synthesis. Francis Younghusband goes beyond this to find a spiritual integration with the organic and the inorganic.<sup>1</sup> There are many who at this juncture of the world's life will think him a bit optimistic, but that is not our concern. Our interest is in the fact of law, and in the connotation of law as limitation.

<sup>1</sup> "The universe is a whole in which all parts are interrelated and united. To this stupendous whole do we belong. Our close and constant connection with this all-inclusive universe is the one great fact upon which we have to focus our attention. . . . We are the creatures through whom the creative spirit carries forward the evolutionary process and creates the world of tomorrow and of millions of years hence. . . . It is a temple of the spirit which will last forever." *World Fellowship of Faith*, ed. by Charles Fredrick Weller.



This is seen quite as clearly in the sociality of nature, the laws of the pack, no less than the mores of society. There are also what are called laws of logic by which thought protects itself from eccentricity and aberration, and in all these areas there is one identical emphasis: Conform or perish. There is no appeal; the proximate penalty to the heedless is disorientation; the ultimate penalty to the insubordinate is death. All of this is in embryo in the dawning awareness of the child to its world, and he will react to law or limitation as to an infringement, deliberate and malign, upon his freedom. His language of protest may not be very complicated, but it is emphatic and generally effective.

Now the difference between a spoiled brat and his elder, who behaves toward restraints in the same way, is chronological only. It is possible for limitation—whether it be called discipline, or law, or even pain—to cease progressively to be an evil as it becomes increasingly and consciously a way of finding security. Thus the wise parent will invoke discipline in order to teach the child that his world is a world of limitations. The unwise parent will perhaps say that it hurts him more than it does the culprit, a confession that will no doubt encourage more youthful cynicism than sympathy. But the meaning of discipline and the restraints it imposes is a very important lesson to learn. Man as animal is inextricably entangled in the weave of natural law. He cannot deny or defy it without penalty but he is not, for all that, its prisoner. Consciously he will use it to achieve new experiences of liberation. Observe how the aeronautical engineer, in order to fly, combines in exact relationships the earthward pull of gravitation and the skyward lift of the vacuum caused by the mechanical lifting of the motor-drawn wing. Just *why* man should *want* to fly is a puzzle the naturalist cannot solve. Man is as much an animal as is an elephant or an eagle, but man alone has dreamed of flying and rigged up the apparatus. Here also the child experience is instructive, for what is more given to imagining the absurd and impossible than the human child? And why? Is this the latent power that will ultimately free man from all limitation? The scientist forbears to comment.

But man not only combines laws in his use of them and achieves superhuman results, he deliberately makes laws. Some are for society because, for example, he has learned to fly and to drive a motorcar and such exercise cannot be left undirected. Some laws are for himself and

are called self-discipline. He is beginnig to show signs of a maturity that no longer depends on instinctive or reflex controls when he limits himself. He may evolve patterns of behavior that are odd or perverse but he will be convinced, in the process, that he is enhancing his personal advantage and making all the varied aspects of his life mesh smoothly. And he will keep them sufficiently flexible—if he is genuinely mature—so that adaptation and change to meet altering circumstances can be effected without shock. To be sure, there is a temptation here to become so sure of himself that he will appropriate the right of arbitrating the behavior of his fellows. This is the sickness of egomania when it reaches the acuteness exhibited by the late great psychopaths Hitler and Mussolini. As the shades of these unlamented figures gibber confidentially to each other, there is mutual acknowledgment, perhaps, of a limitation, a discipline, a law, and—from their point of view—an evil that pursues to certain ruin the swollen egotist who makes himself not only a law unto himself, but unto everybody else. Alas that they were so late finding this out!

The basic intention of discipline, even as it begins in the child's experience, is not to achieve for it a higher quantitative quotient of life. This is the understanding naturalism has, but it is inexact. The intention of discipline is to enhance life qualitatively. A child that learns proper restraints lives a better life than the undisciplined neighbor-terror who is his own age, though he will not be convinced of his advantage by parentally administered penalty every so often. It is this fact that moves the concept of discipline (restraint, law, etc.) from the naturalist's level of *must* to the moralist's level of *ought*. It is when what one ought to do, in terms of objective or subjective standards, becomes the principle of one's self-discipline that man the animal becomes man the person, and restraint loses its aspect of limitation and evil and tends increasingly to become liberation and good.

[ 3 ]

We are saying that while the importance of natural law, both in its descriptive and disciplinary aspects, cannot easily be exaggerated, it falls short of giving us the highest understanding of human behavior. Its uses can never go beyond the preservation and extension of "natural life." And while that may appear to us to be of primary importance, it



is hardly of ultimate value. Natural life may be long or short, hard or easy, robust or weak, but in so far as long, easy, robust are thought to be better—or more natural—than short, hard, weak, they are better only on the physical level. Thus Man o' War was a better horse than most of the animals of his famous stable because he won twenty out of twenty-one races in which he started, and sired more champions; not because he was a more wholesome influence on the fractious young colts in the paddock. Physical laws are utilitarian, not ethical. That is good or right which ministers to life on the physical level. No discipline or limitation is to be tolerated that infringes or abridges physical action or debilitates it. This opens as many doors into the jungle as gates into the temple. Perhaps more.

This is as far as faith based on natural law can carry us. Discipline (or law) that starts out as simple limitation or restraint can be seen as an aid to survival, and in the case of the human animal can be made to serve him as he consciously undertakes to enhance his position or increase his powers.

When we think of discipline within the circumference of religious faith we move into more spacious areas. It is natural and simple to assume that natural law (discipline) is the design of God. But man's capacity for self-discipline and for the framing of social laws creates a problem the lower animals are spared. Man must co-operate with natural law or die; but he can manipulate it and live. Because of this latter capacity he tends to regard himself as the lord of nature and a law unto himself. This is the self-idolatry we have already encountered. It is the road to self-destruction from which no natural law can snatch him.

We have stated elsewhere the way this problem is solved in the minds of those who follow the Biblical revelation. Freedom is seen in paradoxical terms. Man is free but not to be free. In terms of discipline he is free but not to be undisciplined. In terms of law he is free but not to be lawless. Given the power of self-discipline he must develop it, from the moment when as a child he is first made aware that he is on his own. Psychologically this is important. There are some who lay great store by the child's formless wish to be let alone in bowel control, asserting that the elemental experience of defecation symbolizes for the child his first realization of his independent selfhood. But man, as

child or adult, must not misuse his rights to limit himself. He may, in the process, injure himself as well as others. He will avoid the misuse of this power only if he voluntarily binds himself to something he regards as of higher importance than himself. In terms of religion this means voluntary bondage to God.

This does not imply that God performs a shoddy trick by deluding us with the notion that we are free and self-disciplined, in order to let us discover sooner or later that we are only free as far as the tethers of natural law can stretch. The terrible fact of human life is that man can, because he is free, violate every natural law he has encountered and every spiritual and moral law he has coded to the point of complete self and social destruction, and that God will not interpose His veto against man's self-contrived suicide. This is why wars continue despite the frantic prayers of those who think God's business is vetoing man's folly.

No; this creative experience that comes so promptly to us after we are born, is spelled out in almost every fact and feature of life. To every man there comes a time of decision involving the ultimate discipline to which he is to yield. It is easy enough to abandon ourselves to natural law, but if we are not animals, we will not altogether play fair with it. If our faith has led us to believe that God is the highest meaning that can be given to all that we know, then God will supply us the basis and the structure of the discipline to which we yield.

If God is all-inclusive, dynamic, cohesive, love, we bind ourselves to those four qualities in accepting the law of God as the discipline of life. We see at once that two things happen: discipline which in its initial stages presents itself as limitation and evil, becomes freedom and good. So when one is bound to God he is bound to love. Love therefore becomes the law of life, and creativity and community become man's immediate and moral constraints. Thus what has the potency of evil becomes, within the orbit of faith in God, the energy of freedom.

[ 4 ]

Limitation, whether in as mild a form as embarrassment or discipline, is—we have said—the hithermost edge of evil. When the chains that bind us—and they may be mere embarrassment or iron law—fit our wrists so tightly that they cause us actual pain, the problem of evil



moves into larger dimensions. Physical pain and its mental corollary seem to be less susceptible of the manipulations that are possible with law, nor do they, at first glance, seem to lend themselves as agents in developing a higher quality of life.

Physical pain comes as early in the child's experience as the sense of limitation. The family is organized to protect the helpless member from the pain inflicted either by himself or by others, but it is able to do so only to a limited extent. Above the level of physical pain there is the acute suffering of isolation, loneliness, disapproval, neglect. And once outside the protecting circle of the family, suffering impinges more directly and frequently. So, fending for himself, he seeks new groups within which he can be safe from pain of every sort. Thus man is as indefatigable in his flight from pain as he is from restraint. He cannot escape it though he rarely loses the hope that he can mitigate it. Hence pain is his perpetual problem and the inexhaustible opportunity of the drug makers who in compounding pills may create endless troubles for themselves. Man stubbornly feels that being man and not a lower beast, he should be exempt from pain or be able to win a victory over it. Pain, he says, is beneath the dignity of a man. If he feels it, it is noble in him to deny or disguise it. But there is a limit to his endurance and like Job he may eventually scratch his boils and whimper as he sits disconsolately on a dunghill. Finally he will observe that all his fellows are fellow sufferers. Out of this observation his own pain fashions a philosophy. Life is itself an evil, he says, a monstrous idiot evil, and the deity that fashioned it, made it from himself. Thus around the rocky coast of man's experience with pain lies the disintegrating wreckage of man's hopes, his creeds, his faith. The wife of Job must have seemed never more annoyingly practical to him than when she suggested that her stricken spouse should "curse God and die." But he did not. Why? The answer to that is important.

[ 5 ]

Pain, and its analogues, is as pervasive as air. It is universal. It is our habit to describe every disorientation in nature as painful. The writhing of the rock strata under giant pressures, the fierce internal earth-heats that explode in volcano or burn the carbon particle into the hard gem; the atom, split by man's new machines and shot wildly at

a neighbor nucleus to shatter in a power-releasing disintegration, to these we assign the aspect of pain though they are no more than the evidence of nature's inexhaustible dynamism. Similarly the crushed flower or the vine that seems to bleed at the cut of the pruning knife are invested with the capacity for suffering, though whether they do or not is beyond our knowing.

On the sentient level the evidence is clearer and more compelling. Animal suffering is now thought to be more prevalent and real than was once the case. Fossil evidence shows injury lesions millions of years old. The stricken animal soon dies or its natural enemy preys upon it and relieves its misery. That the beasts are mute and seem generally not to give evidence of pain by sound cannot be taken to mean there is less animal suffering but that reaction to it is differently indicated. And yet, for all the evidence, it is not easy to assess the nature or intensity or meaning of animal pain.

Hardly less is the perplexity of those who study human pain. Is it neurological, physiological, psychological? The doctor presses the patient's side and asks "does that hurt?" What is the answer? Does he mean acute, intolerable agony or a mild sensation of discomfort? Pain, one doctor says, is caused by a vitamin deficiency in the micro-film that encysts the unit cell. Feed it and pain goes. Whatever is to be said on such matters is left to others; but of one generalization we can be fairly sure: in the human species pain is not only universal, it is growing in variety and intensity. Pain killers and palliatives seem hardly able to outrun the new pains that afflict us. Suppose they could; would we *feel* better about a painless existence? For anesthesia may be as undesirable as pain. Without asking whether it is possible we can say at once that it would be a highly questionable value, for the capacity to suffer pain is the same that enables us to be aware of well-being, something quite distinct from the absence of discomfort.

If we ask the meaning of those more subtle varieties of pain that are clearly nonphysical, we step off into deeper waters still. Spiritual suffering—understood in this connection as different from psychopathic suffering—that expresses itself in the sense of sin, guilt, frustration, loneliness, etc., where these are normal and not neurotic, they also seem to be on the increase. At least our ways of detecting and identifying them have been defined. The progression of pain from its analogy



in stone and flower up through animal and man to the exquisite spiritual tortures that are suffered by the spiritually sensitive—this may lead us to a strange conclusion. Can it be that God is the greatest of sufferers standing as He does at the apex of being? Does pain find its ultimate manifestation in the agonies of God? Was Pascal right when he said that it is spiritual suffering that gives significance to man? Does this lift the relation of suffering and redemption into larger and more puzzling perspectives? If suffering reaches its ultimate in God, then godliness is painful, if not indeed pain itself. And why be redeemed from the suffering sin involves if we are only to achieve finally a state in which pain is the essence of being?

These are far from frivolous questions though they are so odd as to appear so. Their answer will lead us in one direction or another: we will regard all life—from clod, to flower, to animal, and through man to God as inherently evil. This will land us, not in pessimism that sees things as pretty bad but hopes they can improve, but in evilism that sees everything as incipiently evil and is resigned to it. That is one direction our answers will lead us. The other is that which finds significances to pain that are more satisfying than the mere experience of anesthesia. Is this possible?

[ 6 ]

Not, we think, on the level of naturalism which must dismiss the matter by saying that pain is a phenomenon related to all living tissue. All births are painful. That is a fact from which we may make deductions if we wish, but it must first be confronted as fact. All tissue is subject to chemical change. This may rejuvenate it or destroy it, and soon or late the life process ceases in all tissue and is accompanied by disintegration which is a sort of suffering. And the total organism, no matter what it is, cannot be protected from injury at the hands of other organisms which sometimes seem malignantly designed to harass one another.

In some phases, of course, pain has the value of being protective or defensive. The recently discussed case of a child that was born without nerve ends so that no sensations at all could be transferred to its motor controls, posed the problem that painlessness involves. The child's mother could not leave it for an instant lest, lacking all sensation, it

injure itself with everything within reach. This was far worse than having a hypertrophic capacity to feel heat or cold, or the sharp edge of a knife.

This presents naturalism with a dilemma: it confronts the fact of suffering and agrees that some of it has protective or monitory value. But the *meaning* of pain escapes these simple data. So, the natural sciences make a practical approach to pain, and yielding to humanitarian impulses will give themselves without stint to the relief of pain of every sort on every level of existence. From its point of view a mercy-killing is simply a practical way out of a difficulty. The dilemma created here is observed by the fact already suggested that if scientific ingenuity were ever completely successful in eliminating pain, it would jeopardize life in so far as life is protected by pain. This is not so academic as it seems. The use of DDT to destroy insect pests (a very obvious form of evil) was found to destroy bees also. This not only left hives empty of honey, but fruit trees and flowers unpollinated. Does it not amount to this: that the attempt to relieve pain seems hostile to the natural law by which pain appears to be universal?

[ 7 ]

If we are resolved to make God the highest meaning to everything that we know, we must find a point in our framework of faith for suffering. In the case of limitation—which is the near side of pain, we found that man's capacity for regulating himself led him up to the point where, if he wished, he could bind himself to God. In this, limitation and law are by man's determined act, transmuted into fullness and freedom. In the case of physical suffering, this expedient is not available. Furthermore, we need to be reminded that the *ultimate* explanation of suffering and moral evil cannot be reached by the human mind for the simple fact that suffering is a man's private experience. Since he cannot know what God's private experience is, he will tend to identify what happens to him with what happens to God, when, in fact, it may possibly or probably be true that God's being comprises nothing comparable to what to man is his most puzzling problem. While there is this barrier to an ultimate answer in terms of God and evil, we can find some answers to the questions about the significance of physical evil for man. And if we find answers, we may find some things to do about them.



From the perspectives of religious faith there can be no repudiation of what naturalism has to say. There are some who think that the acceptance of the fact of pain and evil is heresy, a sort of repudiation of God. Such a faith becomes a spiritual dope, yet one may be allowed to ask whether in becoming so it is not morally dangerous. If religion "saves" one from pain or evil, is there not a moral peril in the spurious comfort that results? No; we accept all that is told us by those who study suffering on all levels, but we are not content to consider the problem and end with the paradox that to relieve pain and suffering, while a worthy motive, may turn out to be dangerous since it takes out of human experience something that gives human life significance that is not to be found on any subhuman level.

What is the total significance of the totality of evil—from limitation to physical pain? Is it only a device for protecting the individual or the species? This is the aim of survival from the naturalistic viewpoint. But why survive? Simply for the continuance of the cycle of natural growth? If the struggle for existence hypothecates pain, what is the existence for which the struggle is endured? What of the struggle for significance, or the significance of survival, or the survival of significance? This is not just kicking words about; any one of these phrases opens up the human problem of suffering as naturalism cannot do.

There are certain dubious interpretations of the relation of God to pain. One says that it is an instrument in the divine hands for dealing with moral evil. This is difficult because it is susceptible of no empirical proof, and because it is almost completely borrowed from the naturalistic idea that the infraction of a natural law brings its own inescapable penalties. To say pain is the result of sin in the way that disaster is the consequence of defiance of the law of gravitation cannot be fully supported in any single case, much less, extended to all cases. Furthermore, it makes such protective value as pain is thought to have a part of punishment; thus prudence is punitive. And in some cases, it would appear to make God not only just but not infrequently sadistic. Or, we are told, if pain is not the end result of sin, it can be used to protect one against sin just as it protects against harm. This says too much. Sin causes pain, we say; and then pain cures sin. This is a sort of moral homeopathy.

No; we think that the significance of pain (which is what naturalism is unconcerned to inquire) when seen within the perspectives of faith

in God appears when we see that there are two kinds of pain.<sup>2</sup> One is that which is connoted by the word *pathology*. It comes from the word *patheia* and supplies us also with *pathos*. Here pain is sickness of tissue or bone and is represented by cellular disease or disintegration. Thus conceived, painlessness is *a-pathy* which ultimately is the impassivity of death. The second sort of pain is connoted by the word *agonia*. The Greek stadium was an *agon*, and an athlete was an *agonist*. Thus *agonia* came to mean a wrestling match because in that particular athletic event there seemed to be the highest concentration of voluntarily accepted suffering in order to achieve victory. Today in the prize ring where a punch-drunk heavyweight reels about "absorbing punishment"—as the sports writers put it—in the hope of landing a lucky punch that will knock out his all-but-victorious opponent, *agonia* would be given its most spectacular demonstration.

Pathological pain is inescapable in the physical world but agonistic pain is the symbol of a dedication that is almost fanatical. The pain is not sought for its own sake. This is masochism, and a morbid state. But one who *takes pains* in order to achieve a worthy end, either in craftsmanship or in art, is not infrequently thought to be a fanatic. When one accepts pain in the pursuit of character, whether that of the *Flagellants* or of the *Penitentes*, or in the case of Christ on the cross, fanaticism may modulate in human opinion into saintliness. Here pain is an instrument not of survival or of penalty (justice) but of art. It makes no difference whether the art be that of developing character, or of carving a statue, or of writing a symphony. The familiar word of Origen that "love is an agony" comes into proper focus within this perspective. He was talking in moral terms, of course, but he says what the lover has always said when he is working at the art of making love. What we have here is pain employed deliberately to achieve a value higher than that of mere survival.

This is easy to understand where *agonia* is a conscious choice, but can *patheia* be an aid to higher values also? This, we think, is the only understanding of physical pain that is intelligible and morally respectable. But let us return a moment to the limitations of the naturalistic explanations of pain. Pain, we know, is concomitant to

<sup>2</sup>I am indebted to Gerald Heard for this suggestion. Cf. a brief statement of it in *Prayers and Meditations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), Sec. XXV.



all life processes; its opposite is robustness and vitality. Some pain serves the purposes of living by increasing the possibilities of survival. Beyond this naturalism does not probe since the aim of nature is served when the suffering eliminates or retards the feeble and thus protects the robust. This concept equates the *good* organism with the *robust* organism, and since survival is the only value life seeks, the sure proof of value is continuity. The endless cell is the perfect cell. In the practical approach to pain, naturalism seeks to eliminate it in both the feeble and the robust. If this were successful the survival of the robust would be imperiled. This is the paradox that bedevils the rationalizations of a purely naturalistic approach to pain; namely, that if all pain were obliterated, life itself would be destroyed.

## [ 8 ]

From the viewpoint of religious faith, pain and suffering must be seen within the hypothesis that God is all-inclusive, dynamic, cohesive, and loving. This does not mean that He suffers, though this is a common and significant doctrine. That He does suffer is an inference from human sensitivity to pain, an inference that, as has been said, is plausible but unproved. But from the perspectives of the sufferer, these qualities of God provide an understanding of his own pain that can help transmute it into high values. Suffering is accepted as a datum. The Christian does not say that suffering is the central fact of existence or that pain is illusion. He sees a correlation between suffering and the total creative process, both of God and of man as he is able to participate in it. Within this orbit *patheia* has value; it may be transmuted into *agonia*. Observe the record of the great physical sufferers: Beethoven, Michelangelo, Bizet, Robert Louis Stevenson, Augustine, Dante, Pascal—the list is inexhaustible. Here the all-inclusiveness of pain makes it a power for the achievement of new levels of value, and—since misery loves company—pain becomes a social cohesive. And who has not known what pain can do in the evocation and sublimation of love? In other words, the qualities faith gives to God are given to pain by the Christian sufferer.

Man, in other words, can use suffering creatively because God can, though we are cautious about saying that God suffers. Certainly our physical suffering has no parallel in God's being. Thus suffering can

become redemptive. Why, one asks, is the Cross redemptive? Is the emphasis to be put on God's design for Christ's suffering or Christ's use of pain from which he instinctively recoiled? Could God have wrought redemption by a robust physical genius who was beyond the reach of death? This is a Greek notion, though nearly every god had a vulnerable spot or protected himself against death by talismans and incantations. Hence the cross of Christ was to the Greeks foolishness. We do not say redemption by a chest-thumping savior would have been impossible. We do say that such painless redemption would have forfeited the transcendent moral values in *agonia*. The Cross was redemptive because *patheia* became *agonia*. Can life, we may ask, become redemptive in any other way?

We shall not rid ourselves of suffering. Despite all our analgesics, we will always feel the prod of pain and we shall be impatient, perhaps, with chronic sufferers. Complete surcease from pain might have morally dubious results as well as physical peril. We will have to make friends of pain whether we call it by its proper name *Evil* or by some more friendly designation. But when we have used it to achieve values on higher levels of experience we shall discover that there are two aspects of the problem of evil that are still untouched. They are the facts of death and moral evil or sin. What of them? To a consideration of the former we turn at once.



## Chapter XII

### God and Death

IF THE problem of evil can be made to encircle experience as wide as limitation on the near side and moral collapse on the far side, it must pass through physical pain and death at some point along its radius. Limitation can be transmuted into law that contributes to the ordering, security, and survival of life; pain can serve to protect the organism from danger and *patheia* can, in certain cases, assume the guise and function of *agonia* and thereby minister to spiritual values. What moral evil can do to justify itself is reserved for our discussion of Redemption. In this section we confront the meaning and value of the fact and experience of death.

#### [ 1 ]

Limitation, we said, is an experience encountered almost as early in life as the correlative sense of repletion. Death is the latest—if not the last—of mortal experiences. So far as we know empirically, nothing can be done to avert physical death or to transmute it into a continuing experience. It is the end, irreversible and ultimate, whether it comes soon or late in life. Its relation to pain is, in the common mind, clear. *Patheia* is part of the process by which death brings itself to fulfillment, and death is therefore the necessary *terminus ad quem* of pain. Given enough suffering death will ensue. Relieve suffering and death is deferred. When, however, pain has reached its ultimate in intensity, death writes *finis* in letters that cannot be erased.

It is not easy to disprove the logic of the common mind on this point largely because the most ambitious and successful efforts to mitigate pain have never been able to avert ultimate death. Further-

more, pain and death being inescapable, they are easily paired as two parts of the one process of disintegration or defeat of life. Hence the syllogism of suffering ends in the conclusion of death. And yet, as we have seen, not all pain, whether *patheia* or *agonia*, necessarily ends in death. Is this fact sufficiently established to allow the hypothesis that death may not, after all, be integral to the suffering by which the bodies of earth are broken? This, if plausible, might offer a way of understanding death, not as integral to pain, but to life.

Consider first the fact of death as a universal experience. Here death is used to mean disorganization as it might apply metaphorically to inorganic matter, and disintegration and the cessation of cellular vitality as it applies to all organic structure. Thus, from the globe's incandescent core to its circumference of water, rock, and earth, and even to its winding sheet of atmosphere, our cosmic habitat is Necropolis. In the furious furnace at the earth's center the elements are consumed and reborn in the unwasted energies of their radioactive essence. Along the margins of the earth's thin crust lie the skeleton wastes of once living creatures or things; and in the upper air the incredible cold immobilizes life in the hardy vital organisms that drift like dust through the arches of the sky. No thing, no organism, no species transcends the boundaries or outreaches the limits of mortality that rests like a blight both on the gay and the desperate efforts of all living things to survive.

Sometimes this vast death of everything, even though in some forms it results in a quick transfer to another "living" essence (this is the law of the indestructibility of matter or, more correctly understood now as the maintenance of energy balance), is accompanied by the prodigious release of power. And yet this death is not necessarily the result or the concomitant of pain. In the giant molecular reorganizations in the inferno of incalculable heat there is no pain nor is there anything that is analogous to suffering though there is fission and disintegration before reorganization follows. Nor is this universal death accompanied by universal suffering on the sentient or self-conscious levels. If death were pain or if pain were death, life and immortality would be senselessness, and an anodyne or a prolonged agony would be the essence of vitality.

Not only is death not always accompanied by pain or induced by the causes of pain, death is not infrequently accompanied by a bland



delight or even ecstasy. We are told that certain animals, when death approaches, seem urged by an instinct to go quietly away and find a comfortable place to die. And the record of human dyings is full of the evidence that pain is often overcome in an exquisite euphoria that sometimes expresses itself in words of delight or visible expressions of complete well-being. Whether then this universal thing we call death is due to exhaustion of nerve or cellular tissue, of the disorganization of function or the interruption of a process, it may or may not be attended by suffering.

Even so, there is very real psychic suffering induced by the fact of the ineluctability of death. To those who regard it as a purely natural phenomenon, it is a discouraging if not indeed a terrifying prospect. To most individuals, we do not doubt, death is the most appalling of all empirical facts. We therefore tend to refuse to face it or we speak of it furtively and in whispers, or use language that dulls the sharp edge of our certainty that it is the prospect of us all. Thus religion of every sort, from the primitive to the sophisticated, has had to come to terms with death. By the disciplines of faith that have been sometimes frenzied and fanatical and sometimes subdued and submissive, the religious mind has tried to avert, soften, or understand this awesome thing. Similarly the philosopher has either tried to assimilate it into a reasonable system of thought or to ignore it as the essence of irrationality. Add to the religious and philosophical efforts to encompass this unencompassable fact the irresponsibility that laughs at the prospect and then quails in the presence of death or even defies it noisily in pretense that it is either fraud or folly. There are even those who say that man's essential nobility is disclosed only in his refusal to bow to its solemn mandate. If he must die, he will be whipped to his doom, shouting as he goes his godlike defiance at its indignity and obscenity.

[ 2 ]

We have been concerned to ask the meanings assigned to experience by what is called the faith of naturalism. What is the meaning of death from this viewpoint? The simplest answer is that death is the cessation of life. Life is a process by which new individuals of a species or new species are produced and by which all species are nurtured. Death is the termination of that process so that living species

cease to exist and new species are aborted. This is a sophisticated judgment or, it might be more correctly stated, a laboratory deduction. But to the primitive mind death does not necessarily hold such connotations. Man, in his pristine state, exhibits an almost animal unconcern for his dead. This indifference, says the anthropologist, is due to no idea that the personality is annihilated. Indeed it is characteristic of savage societies that man's future state is thought to involve no discontinuity with the present. Thus what to sophisticated societies seems like cruelty to the sick—such as the Eskimo custom of walling up the sick and leaving them to die, or disrespect to the dead—such as the exposure of the defunct to carrion birds or beasts, is nothing of the kind. It is, rather, the belief that death is not the termination of life but an episode in it. The hunter simply moves from one hunting ground to another, a happier one. Death, like normal sleep, is the absence of the manikin (soul) that inhabits the body, in the latter case the absence is brief, in the former, permanent. Indeed the almost universal refusal of feral man to accept death as the terminus of life is, in itself, a striking and important fact. This does not mean that death has been rationalized in lofty terms similar to the belief in immortality that it has been argued in highly cultivated societies. It is, on the contrary, accompanied by gross and dangerous superstitions. If a man dies without having been seriously wounded he may be thought the victim of the evil eye of an enemy. Thus witchcraft and sorcery and traffic with demons become a part of the struggle for survival and in themselves, as often as not, are instruments of physical death.

We set aside, for the moment, this primitive denial of the finality of death and its parallel with the carefully argued speculations about personal survival after death. These will be considered specifically in the next chapter. What it is necessary to say here is that from the point of view of scientific naturalism, life is ended by death. Therefore life is ultimately doomed because death is universal. The only way life can be victorious over death is by an infinite extension in time.

At the same time, since life does not contain within itself the capacity for infinite prolongation on which the success of life depends, life is the thrall of time. It cannot escape. It is time's debtor and no matter how fabulous life's wealth, it cannot pay its way out of debtor's prison. Death, says the biologist, is inherent in life. Life, therefore, exhibits



a hopeless contradiction in itself between strength and powerlessness. It possesses energies, prodigious, virile, promethean, creative, restorative—an all-but invincible power of survival. But it carries with it also a "body of death." Concealed on its person is a vial of poison which, in spite of itself, it will inevitably drink. Or, as Omar conceives it, it is a potion brought by an angel:

So when the angel of the darker drink  
At last shall find you by the river's brink,  
And offering his cup, invite your soul  
Forth to his lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.

Here then is a paradox into which the faith of naturalism is led. Life is negated by death. Within this charnel house man holds brief tenancy. And yet, as we shall see in another connection, without physical death, physical life is impossible. The eggs of a pair of codfish, if they all hatched, would in seven years fill all the oceans of the earth chockablock. Only as some organisms die can other organisms live. Those who are appalled by the geometrical multiplication of human beings and the threat this poses, are reassured, if only for the moment, by a visualization of the human glut that long ago would have suffocated human life if no one had ever died.

The answer to this physical situation is not provided by the scientist whose interest is to study life's behavior and, where it seems desirable, devise means for protecting it and enhancing its chances for survival. The answers that have been given are those of religious faiths that see, on the one hand as certain religions do, no hope at all and therefore are resigned to the noble and lyrical paganism of Omar,<sup>1</sup> or on the other hand, something within the cosmic dimensions, as the Hebrew-Christian tradition does, that makes of death not an enemy but an ally, not an ending but a beginning.

[ 3 ]

What of the place of death within the circumference of our religious faith? As with naturalism, this understanding is correlative to an

<sup>1</sup> "As then the tulip from her morning cup  
Of heavenly vintage from the soil looks up;  
Do you devoutly do the like 'til heav'n  
To earth invert you, like an empty cup."

understanding or hypothesis concerning life. To biochemistry life is a process, as yet hidden in mystery as to its origin, that, so long as it lasts is able, by making use of its environment, to sustain itself. To Christian faith, life is an extension or invasion or impregnation of all plasma with a vital energy. Certain biologists—and following their lead there are also philosophers—call this vitalism. It is no more than hypothesis for this *elan vital*, as Bergsen named it, cannot be isolated from its habitat and examined per se. But as a hypothesis it has dignity and cogency. Recently a physicist predicted that the next half century would see the physical source of life scientifically isolated and explained. This, he insisted, was not unsupported optimism though he did not give away the modicum of fact that inspired his prediction. Not long since, at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, another physicist undertook to prove to his skeptical colleagues that life was the result of the interfusion of two fields of electromagnetism. That he gave no hint of what made fields interfuse or how life actually emerged caused one of his friends to describe the hypothesis by the unscientific word *hokum*. Still and all, one welcomes every effort to probe the secret with scientific instruments.

While this is going on—indeed long before it was tried—the hypothesis (invention) of God as the highest meaning of all that we know, related God to life. Life is not God, though some have said so; life is one of the intrusions of God or one evidence of His invasion of the cosmos. Philosophy has for a long time been seeing the intrusion of God into human experience in terms of beauty, goodness, and truth. It is a simple matter to say that God *is* beauty, goodness, and truth, but this is insupportable if He is thought of, as He must be, in categories that transcend all rational formulations, though which are not, for that reason, irrational. Thus life is of God; though again we must avoid using this as the first century gnostics did—as emanations, demiurges that attempted to bridge the gap between an evil creation and its divine creator.

The rationalizations of this idea have never been satisfactory. Indeed they are not ever likely to be. The invention, however, is implicit in the idea of a creating, sustaining, dynamic, cohesive, loving being. And it is set at variance with the purely naturalistic idea that death is the



end of life for the simple reason that it is difficult to conceive of God as dying or His invasion of the cosmos as being interdicted or canceled by what is called death.

## [ 4 ]

When the physicist speaks of the indestructibility of matter he is saying something very close to this idea of God. Yet we do not merely say that God is indestructible. God never changes and therefore cannot die. Life, then, in so far as it is an invasion of God, never dies. To those who hold to the Christian hypothesis, death is neither the opposite of life nor its negation. It is a phase or factor of it. This makes a very great deal of difference in one's attitude toward this universally baffling and frightening experience, for instead of being appalled by an enemy, it can be welcomed, in due time, as an ally. Thus the Christian can see death and look it straight in the face instead of tiptoeing past with averted eyes. He sees death, not as an end—either as a goal or as a terminal episode of a series—but as a significant means to an end made significant by the fact, meaning, and activity of God.

What is that end? Life—a better quality of life presumably, but essentially nothing more than life. Naturalism says that death, by interrupting life, clears the way for new life. At this point the circumferences of naturalism and theism intersect and form a common sector. But the circumferences do not coincide since death, from the naturalist's point of view, ends one life in order that another may exist. Theism says life is not ended; it passes into another phase so that the initial phase of new life may be begun for new organisms.

Thus religious faith goes beyond the point where it makes momentary contact with naturalism. It says death is the agent of life; it is one of its creative instruments. Here the idea of the chrysalis is suggestive though given a connotation that the entomologist cannot allow. He tells us the pupa, winding itself in its silken shroud is not preparing for death, and therefore it does not die. It is passing through a phase from which it emerges a new sort of creature. Physical death, he says, may partake poetically of the chrysalis simile, but physical life actually ends. All the physical functions cease, all cellular structure disintegrates, decay succeeds growth, and man is dead. But, we reply, the essence that gives man his uniqueness is not physical therefore it

cannot suffer dissolution. This is true because, as an invasion of God, both what we call physical life and death are the agents of His power, His cohesiveness, His all-inclusiveness, and His love.

Our major difficulty here is formidable and cannot be resolved but it can be seen in proper perspective. Our trouble is that try though we may, we are unable to think in purely qualitative terms. Thus this invasion of God is likely to mean to us that part of the quantity of God is pinched off with the creation of each living thing. This is obviously absurd and yet we cannot conceive of the process in other terms. Our minds are unequipped for thinking of God as the sum of purely qualitative components. (Note the word *sum*—a designation of quantity.) So, when Paul wrote of a "spiritual body" as descriptive of the nature of the post-mortem life, he contradicted himself. Spirit is pure quality, body is pure quantity. He actually says that the soul that is resurrected is a quality-quantity. We are not offended by this for the simple reason that there is no available language by which non-comprehensible ideas are to be expressed. The closest we can come to the matter is to say that death, in the Christian view, is an alteration of structure (though we do not know what the structure is when the change has taken place) and process, in order to meet the specifications of a new nonspacetime environment.

There is a familiar metaphor that is helpful here since it uses thought-forms that are intimately familiar to us all. When death is spoken of as birth, does this imply a contradiction? From the viewpoint of natural science, yes; from the perspectives of religion, no. It asserts that there may be a similarity between what we know as physical birth into a physical environment and a spiritual birth into a spiritual environment. Could the fetus be consulted it would doubtless insist that its fetal existence was the only one it was to have, and that for warmth, protection, and nourishment, it could not possibly be improved upon. Then comes the agony and triumph of parturition, and there is begun a new life which will accommodate itself to a new kind of existence. Is it good? Is it as good as its vaguely remembered fetal state? Depth psychology tells us man never gets over subconsciously desiring to return to the serenity of the womb and his inability to do so is one of the causes of his frustrations in a life he involuntarily accepts. But this is not the whole story. The longing for greater fullness is quite as germinal to the psyche as the wish to return to the



tiny placental paradise it has left. Man is frustrated in the gratification of this longing for fullness by death, physical death which he has been told is the defeat of life. If, however, his more complex earthly existence is to be regarded as a prenatal period which ends in physical death, death may indeed be birth. Once again, as the fetal child could foreknow nothing of its postnatal existence, so mortal man may know nothing of his postmortal existence. This would, however, no more arrest the process of death-birth, than fetal ignorance could delay the process of physical birth-death. In both cases there is exit and entrance, and life (physical) provides both for the birthing, as death (physical) provides both for the dying. We die to live; we live to die.

## [ 5 ]

The primitive refusal to believe that death is the terminus of life is, as we have commented above, almost universal. Does this mean that the Christian concept of death as discussed here is simply another form of the primitive idea? It cannot be disputed that to the extent to which the feeling of survival is instinctive that has subsequently fashioned for itself simple or involved rationalizations—to that extent the Christian hope is of one piece with the primitive idea. This is not to say, however, that the two ideas are coextensive or coterminous. The elements, both of thought and of action, that have made Christian culture a highly elaborate one, have embroidered this elemental idea. We shall discuss the whole matter of immortality subsequently, but at this point it can be said that the purely religious component supplied to our culture by the Hebrew-Christian tradition, has created ideas and practices with respect to death that are on a level higher than primitive instincts and behavior.

Thus we have adumbrations of the idea of survival in the early Hebrew faith in the ultimate triumph of the divine intention. This found its way explicitly into the eschatological writing which, during the ferment of national crisis, came to the surface of man's thought in the shape of visions, dreams, or fantasies, that for all their figurative formulations nevertheless were the asseveration of a great confidence. That God's purpose, in so far as it was related to His people, could not be set at nought, was the center, both of Israel's political and theological thought. That the idea is less explicit with reference to the

fortunes of individuals is due largely to the fact that because of centuries of training the mind of the individual Jew was uniquely identified with the community into which he was integrated. Its survival was assured and in that corporate assurance he individually participated. It was in the drama of Job, written late in Israel's history and in a time of troubles, that the feared disintegration of the Hebrew community under the impact of alien cultures drove the hero to affirm for himself his confidence in his individual survival.<sup>2</sup>

In the New Testament, the confidence of the individual in being victorious over death seems to rise in proportion to the declining hope for the victory of the community of Israel over political death. It is an interesting fact and deserving of more attention than can be given here, that there seems to be a relation in the rise and fall of national hopes to the rise and fall—or more properly the intensity and diminution—of personal concern for survival. This may be the operation of man's gregarious instinct that tends to submerge personal concerns so long as he seems sure of group security. When his group is threatened he naturally has to shift for himself, both physically and intellectually. Whatever may be thought about this, it is undeniable that Jesus was clearly aware of his orientation toward eternity, that earth and physical existence were auxiliary to an eternal existence centered in God. God, he said, was not the God of the dead but of the living, and in this comment he was clearly indicating that those referred to as dead—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—were still living.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, he

<sup>2</sup> "Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! That with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock forever!" This appears to reflect a doubt as to the continuance of his *influence* after death. "But as for me, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at last will stand upon the earth: And after my skin, even this body is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God; whom I, even I, shall see, on my side, and mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger" (Job 19:23-27). Here is an affirmation that goes far beyond the primitive indifference to the dead body as the basis for a more or less formless intuition concerning the survival of the person (manikin) that once inhabited it.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 22:31: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitudes heard it they were astonished at his teaching." The astonishment was perhaps as much due to the realization that they had forgotten the ancient words he was quoting from Ex. 3:6, as that he was sharpening to a personal focus what had become for them only a fading corporate hope.



gave to the fears of national death a fillip of hope by his recovery and reassertion of the permanence of the Kingdom of God even after the political death of the nation in which that hope had been first nurtured.

That this confidence in the impotence of physical death to destroy what God had extruded into human life became increasingly explicit as the Christian culture grew is clear to an even casual reading of the New Testament. Paul argues cogently against the current doubts of the skeptics in the agora and the faint-hearted in the little groups that he visited all over the Mediterranean world. No more triumphant personal attestation to this potent invention is to be found than that which, as he saw his own physical death approaching, he wrote to his young protege Timothy.<sup>4</sup> It is, we are sure, significant that one who was as intimately acquainted with death as he was, and was never squeamish about calling death, death, should, in this connection, refer to his imminent dying as a libation—a ritual act, and as a departure. Anything but cessation.

[ 6 ]

Certainly the most daring of all the affirmations of this Christian repudiation of the finality of death is that of Paul, set in the dogmatic claim that death has itself been abolished.<sup>5</sup> If this is not to be dismissed out of hand as an aberration that flies in the face of everyday fact, it may be considered as a profound insight. Surely Paul did not mean that physical death had been abolished. That would have put the act of Jesus on the level of the quaint myths that exist in the folklore of all lands. Thus Sisyphus, King of Corinth, kept death a prisoner until Ares, the Greek God of War, set him free. In Venice Beppo the peddler tied him up in a bag for eighteen months. In Sicily an innkeeper caught him in a bottle, and a monk hid him in his moneybag for forty years. In German lore, Hansel the Gambler kept death up a tree for seven years. These—together with a memorable motion picture, *Death Takes a Holiday*—might be taken to indicate that man is still not emancipated from the primitive belief that it is

<sup>4</sup> II Tim. 4:6: "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is at hand . . . henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness. . . ."

<sup>5</sup> II Tim. 1:10: ". . . our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

somehow unnatural to die. But what Paul is saying is as far from folk tales as the Christian belief in survival is from the savage's indifference to death. He is saying that Christ has abolished death, not by reversing a physical life process that ends in death but by making death a part of the process of life. Life, to use Markham's metaphor employed in another connection, drew a circle that took death in. "Death," he asks, "where is thy venom?" And his answer is that venom has been transformed into elixir. This is either nonsense or deep wisdom. Is it possible to see what he means?

That he was not merely indulging in an apostrophe to Jesus Christ is shown by the fact that he adduces the resurrection of Jesus (however it is to be understood) as evidence that light has been cast on life, light that stemmed from the gospel. How did the gospel illuminate life? If we turn to the first statement Jesus gave of it,<sup>6</sup> and from which he did not vary, we make an interesting discovery. He was dealing here with the "dark side of experience." We might even say he was dealing in practical terms with certain segments of the problem of evil. In our study we have included in the full scope of what is regarded as evil all that falls within the sense of limitation, pain, death, and moral collapse. Observe how inclusive he made it. Beginning with poverty, which is a common form of limitation, he goes on to touch captivity—a very terrible form of restraint—and then to the blinded eyes and the bruised flesh, symptoms of physical suffering. He does not touch on death or moral evil at this point, but he pronounces a principle that may be thought to cover every aspect of the problem. It is contained in the words: "Today this hath been fulfilled."

To be sure, this does not mean that at that moment all these evil things disappeared as by the incantation of a phrase. If it has any meaning at all it must be that life, the dark side of which had remained so long in the shadows of hopelessness, was now flooded with light.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 4:16-21: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, To set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. . . . And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened upon him. And he began to say unto them, Today this scripture hath been fulfilled in your ears."



Life thus illumined showed itself not as the prison house of evil but as the arena of free action. Evil, in other words, can be transmuted. Poverty can become riches, limitation can become law, blindness and physical disability (*patheia*) can become *agonia*. If this is the light that the gospel was casting on life then its brightness was not to be shaded against the other aspects of evil, death, and sin, which he did not specifically mention.

In what way did the gospel illuminate the resurrection? Was it not by the application of the principle he had announced with reference to certain forms of evil to its crowning infamy, death? For what is resurrection except the experience, with respect to death, that is already seen in the lesser forms of evil. It too is essentially the substitution of richness for poverty, of freedom for captivity, of sight for the blurred half-vision, of wholeness for the bruised tissue. This, we say, was a spiritual experience, but is it for that reason any less real! The abolishment of death was not a matter of arresting all the disintegrative tendencies resident in the body, nor was the abolishment of poverty achieved by endowing the poor with Midas' doubtful magic. The same is to be said of captivity and physical suffering. It did mean that it is possible to transmute these experiences into a type of life, freedom, and health, that give the living spirit the sense of living in a new dimension of light and happiness.

## [ 7 ]

The matter of moral evil and its redemption is to be the subject of a later chapter, but in this connection it may be asked in what way, if any, death is related to moral evil? For some, physical death is the result of moral evil. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The Genesis *mythos* with the introduction of the sin of disobedience and the expulsion from Eden as a result of man's egoism is also cited in this context. Yet if physical death is the result of sin, then indeterminate longevity would seem to be the correlative result of righteousness. That none achieve the latter state and that all fall under the former blight may be explained by the obvious fact that "there is none that is righteous, no not one." That moral evil is visited by physical evils cannot be denied, and if one goes far enough in the direction of moral evil, he can destroy himself physically. In this case, however, it is not his moral

2 evil that destroys him but the physical debility induced by sin. Too many evil men are able to be bad and healthy at the same time to allow an equation between sin and death.

The penalties invoked by moral evil are against the spirit that has deliberately yielded to sin. As the early Christians reflected on the death of Jesus Christ they had difficulty adjusting the fact of what they called his sinlessness to the fact of his death. Their dilemma was that they had to admit on the one hand that he deserved death or on the other that he was the innocent victim of a slipshod administration of justice. Thus it was conceived that he, by imputation, was made sin and so died. This, however, created another dilemma from which later thought has not found easy escape. Is imputed sin, sin? To make him to be sin was as serious an injustice as to make him who was innocent die. Even his assumption of the moral evil of the world could not make him evil since so generous an act would be in itself the very quintessence of nobility.

Perhaps the experience in the Garden of Betrayal can be reassessed to advantage here. This is a fragment of the gospel that casts light on life, the life of Christ himself. Was his suffering in the garden *patheia* or *agonia*? Obviously it was the latter. Was it death he was seeking to avoid? Did he think that his physical body could in some way be exempt from the fate of all physical bodies? We doubt it. It was pain, *patheia*, from which he recoiled. The cup was the prospect of pain, the exquisite, long-drawn-out anguish of physical suffering that threatened him. From this he sought deliverance. That he did so does him honor; to have courted it deliberately might have been forgotten ages ago as an act of bravado of a frightened man and nothing more. That he could have avoided death but could not avoid pain is the very essence of his struggle. It was thus that *patheia* became *agonia*, accompanied by great drops of blood.

To sum up. As natural science confronts the decay of tissue and the disorganization of function, it calls the process pain or death. For the sake of keeping a balance between foodstuffs and living creatures it is fortunate that organisms die. Even the efforts of science to prolong life—the new medical interest called *geriatrics*—has highly doubtful implications. Man lives; man dies. The balance is kept fairly even.



But as we confront the vague intimations of death as they emerge in the experiences of limitation and pain, we discover that man is able to use them to his own advantage and to that of his fellows. Thus as limitation becomes law and *patheia* sometimes becomes *agonia* man exhibits the quality of spirit that distinguishes him from the old animal that crawls away to die alone. But man cannot avert or subvert the ultimate evil, which is death. All men die. Does this mean that all his efforts are to yield at last to this hideous irony? Somehow he will not admit it. As a savage he believes the spirit of the dead comrade is off seeking another habitation; as a philosopher he looks at life steadily and as a whole and, as often as not, convinces himself that the meaning of existence is not encompassed by his physical organism.

Does the conflict between these faiths of the scientist, the primitive, and the philosopher have no final resolution? Perhaps not, for in each of us there is something of all three. Yet faith in God as the highest meaning of all that we know makes a difference in our thinking about death. It ceases to be imprisonment and becomes liberation; it is no longer a finale; it is an overture. Death has no more dominion over us. Why? The Christian answers: Jesus Christ hath abolished death.

But what of man's sin and the death of the soul! To that we presently turn.

## Chapter XIII

### God and Redemption

BEFORE we engage ourselves with the question of Immortality, which as a matter of sequence should follow a consideration of Death, we shall turn aside for a discussion of sin and redemption. Sin, or moral collapse, is the ultimate evil. It is even familiarly called the death of the soul and has been thought to carry with it a destruction more terrible than physical death. We have tried to see that in the Christian view physical death can be regarded as something quite other than cellular disintegration or functional disorganization. It can come to be for those who see in God the highest explanation of all that they know, a birth, the introduction of the spirit of man into a new environment, the final stage in the process of transmutation that has been operative on many levels of man's mortal existence.

But sin is man's deliberate rebellion against that element within him which is God's intrusion of Himself. It is a conscious and determined refusal to yield to the persuasions of God's Spirit. It is the defiant establishment of himself in the place where God alone has the right to be. Having eaten of the tree of knowledge, as the ancient story puts it, he has become as the gods, and, unsatisfied with being *like* a god, he has arrogated to himself the *status* of God. This usurpation cannot go unrebuked or unpunished. The warning—that disobedience incurs the penalty of death—having been served, its fulfillment cannot be interrupted. The malediction that followed this first symbolic act of unfiliality in Genesis was complete. Because of man's sin, enmity was interposed between man and beast; pain crowded into Eden, and man and his wife were to be forever at odds. The earth, once generous with



its fruitage, turned niggard, and yielded nothing except to toil and sweat, and man's ultimate hope rose no higher than the dust from which he was made and to which he was to return at last.

## [ 1 ]

There is much in this deeply perceptive *mythos* that has both informed and perplexed those who have sought to know the meaning of man's moral rebellion as it is contained in the Biblical revelation. We cannot put back into it the ethical presuppositions or conclusions or the moral sensitiveness of our own times. Just what the Fall of Man is allowed to mean will depend on some factors external to the ancient story. It is not clear whether Adam's wish to know is in itself evil. Knowledge, from one point of view, seems to have been forbidden the primal pair. But how then could they have acted morally? The very sin of Eden was a knowing rebellion. Before partaking of the forbidden fruit it was known that to taste it was to disobey. Therefore the knowledge of good and evil was anterior to the bite that was supposed to supply such knowledge. Nor, we suggest, is there, from our point of view, a logical or moral sequence between man's illicit wish to know and his doom to return to the dust. Since the knowledge of good and evil is the most important sort, because all of man's ingenuity and wisdom is ultimately brought to the bar of moral judgment, one wonders why it should have been forbidden. Is innocence a state superior to that in which one must endlessly struggle for righteousness? Even though man cannot win his way through to godliness for the reason that the nearer he gets to it the more prone he is to credit his success to his own efforts—which is the root-pride from which all moral defeat stems—there is something to be said for the moral value of struggle per se that even the most saintly or the most sordid would hardly exchange for some sort of congenital innocence. Clearly the rigors of the judgment in Eden had to be mitigated. This was done by the discovery that God is not only a God of justice but also of love and mercy. He is the God of All Grace. The justice that was to separate man from Eden, from his spouse, from the friendly soil and eventually from life itself was, in the growing experience of Israel, modified by the grace that forgave him and set him, not in another Eden, but in a world more like our own, in which for all his sense of

shame before the presence of God, he could "till the ground from whence he was taken" and make something of a new start for himself.

[ 2 ]

There is, we think, a story of another man in another field that presents the problem of sin in somewhat less frustrating form. It is the story of the Field of Blood and of the man Judas swinging from a tree where he had hanged himself.

Before turning to this episode, however, it is important to set the problem of sin and redemption over against that type of faith which sees in nature the highest explanation of all that we know. What has naturalism to say about this? Nothing. As we observed in our study about law, for the naturalist, order is the desired end and disorder is evil. In so far as an organism or a radioactive particle behaves after the order of its nature, it is good. Man, as a creature of nature, obeys its orders instinctively most of the time. Sometimes he gets out of order. This, we are told, is not because he has decided to be disorderly but because some natural cause of which he may be ignorant is out of kilter. Man's rationalizations of disorder in terms of the perversity of his will are entertaining to the naturalist, but wholly unconvincing. This puts it bluntly, to be sure, but for all that, correctly. The nearest the naturalist can allow himself to come to explaining sin as designed rebellion against a moral order is to say that certain types of behavior are conducive to the smooth functioning of the human organism, individual or social. Conversely certain types are inimical to the sense of well-being. He will discover and encourage the former and warn against the latter, but he will not permit himself the luxury of moralizing about it.

This means, of course, that sin and redemption are religious matters altogether. They find themselves only within the circumference of a faith that holds its high meanings in terms of transcendent laws. In the case of the Christian faith, sin and redemption are an affair between man and God. This confrontation of man and God is the most awesome and fateful of all life's experiences. If it has no place in a naturalistic faith, all the more reason perhaps that it should be put forth in the name of a higher faith. And what, one may ask, is quite



so evident today as the terror let loose in the world by man's sin, sin that was never more clearly identifiable as the ill-begotten spawn of his pride? The true dimensions of the human struggle are conceivable only in moral terms. We will be spared the global destruction that at this moment portends only if we come to grips with sin *in* God's terms and with redemption *on* God's terms.

What of the other story of a man in a field? The fate of this wretched man is very skimpily told in the record. This is itself a strange circumstance. Can it be that its significance was underestimated and therefore given barest mention? Or is it possible that the horrid deed was so monstrous that it was better passed over lightly? We remember that the record, both in Matthew and Acts,<sup>1</sup> was written from thirty to forty years after the event and for that reason must have been the subject of considerable speculation by those who remembered it or heard the oral accounts of it. The fact that the Acts account is enclosed in parentheses is interesting. This seems to indicate that the brief reference was not germane to the record but was being inserted for some other reason. Furthermore, in neither account is there any effort to provide explanation or clue to the understanding of Judas' crucial part in the crucifixion episode; though it is almost certain that it was talked about a great deal. Nothing has so puzzled later ages; is it likely that those closest to it could have dropped it into oblivion with no more than a passing thought?

Indeed such reference to it as we have is contradictory. The Matthew story indicates that Judas was overcome with remorse; that he saw through the implications of his treachery and came to a clear conclusion about the innocence of Jesus, and of his own sin. He undertook to make reparation by returning the price of the betrayal to those who had bargained for it. Going even beyond that he clearly passed judgment on himself, gave himself the maximum penalty, and executed the sentence by his own hands. If there is anything redemptive in the successive steps recounted here: repentance, reparation, judgment of his victim's innocence and his own guilt, self-imposed sentence and execution, then Judas would appear to have balanced the scales and met the sternest exactions of justice. And yet Judas is not only the world's most hated betrayer, he is the eternally unshriven.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 27:3-10; Acts 1:18-19.

The Acts account is neither so specific nor, we may say, so charitable. Put in parentheses it gives in minimum compass a picture of cynical indifference instead of contrition. Judas not only did not return the tainted silver pieces, he went out and invested them in what to him must have appeared a likely piece of property. While walking in this field he met his death by accident. The only judgment placed against him is the statement that introduces the parenthesis, to the effect that he bought the field "with the reward of his iniquity" which, in the light of the execration in which he has been held for nineteen centuries, seems a rather pale indictment.

We are warranted, we think, in assuming that during the four decades after the event this archconspirator in what has been widely thought to be the greatest tragedy in history, was the center of two conflicting reports. One allows the weight to fall crushingly upon him. He is aware of it and of his just deserts. The other allows him to escape compunction and die of an accident. Subsequent centuries of thought about Judas have assigned various reasons for his treachery: panic, personal ambition, inverted loyalty, and what not. Relatively little thought seems to have been given to the problem of redemption as it is posed by Judas. It may be repugnant to our sense of loyalty to Christ to allow even the hope that the redemptive process was available to such a sinner. This, however, does not exempt us from facing up to the issue.

[ 3 ]

The problem here deals with the Christian concept of redemption. It is likely that for this reason it persists in interest. It is likely also that the authors of the two accounts missed this emphasis. It would have been natural for them to have done so for two reasons: first, the evil deed may have been wholly beyond their comprehension and thus the briefest reference to it was the best; second, the two reports are set within the ideological framework of a pagan attitude toward evil that is still current but which was never true to the Hebrew-Christian tradition of a God of justice and mercy. Zechariah (7:9) had said: "Thus hath Jehovah of hosts spoken, saying, execute true judgment, and show kindness and compassion every man to his brother." The father of the infant John (Zacharias in Luke 1:77-79) had prophesied:



"Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people in the remission of their sins because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us . . . to guide our feet unto the way of peace." Here, in two widely separated utterances, the clear stream of the religious tradition that Jesus shared, is seen. God is just; God is merciful.

Contrast this with the idea of retributive justice or nemesis which was as high as the ethical thought of the Greco-Roman world had reached. Justice made no allowance for forgiveness as forgiveness found no need for justice. One was forgiven or vengeance was exacted; the two, vengeance and compassion, could not be paired. This was the story of Medea, heroine of the tragic theme of Greek and Roman poets and dramatists. Defrauded of the love of her spouse, she could not forgive him the shame and pain his philandering had caused her. Vengeance was her only resource, and it was swift, condign, and terrible, embracing ultimately all Athens in its destruction. She could not even hold her hands against the slaughter of all she loved best, her father and finally her two children.<sup>2</sup> The answer to the sin of her Jason was revenge. That was all. Matthew's account makes no allowance for the forgiveness of Judas though he reports his remorse. Nemesis pursues him, and destroys him by his own hands. The Acts account introduces nemesis in the form of a violent accident and follows the trail of blood endlessly down the centuries by the horrid name given to the scene of his death.

Despite this puzzling or casual dismissal of the story there is a way in which it can be said to provide us an excellent case for the study of sin and redemption. Hard cases make bad laws, we are told. The reverse is true with the redemptive enterprise. This is one of the fundamental differences between law and grace, between justice

<sup>2</sup> One of the choruses of Euripides' tragedy of Medea is translated thus by Campbell. She is asked:

"O haggard queen! to Athens dost thou guide  
Thy glowing chariot, steeped in kindred gore;  
Or seek to hide thy damnet parricide  
Where peace and justice dwell forevermore?"

It was obvious to the ancient dramatist that peace and justice were threatened when and where Vengeance entered the scene.

and mercy. Under law, where the breach is grievous the penalty mounts in severity; the more evil the deed the more stern the reprisals of the law. Under grace, where the sin is greater the demand for, and the exercise of, mercy is greater. This is true even though it has been subject to the perversion that was long ago recognized: "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Romans 6:1). It sets off in detail the dissimilarity between the pagan idea of nemesis and the Christian idea of redemption. Medea could not forgive, she had to destroy; God cannot destroy, He has to forgive. If this seems to put the matter too starkly it may be because we have refused to make the case of Judas a clear test of the efficacy and meaning of God's way of dealing with moral evil. If we say that the sin of the betrayer of Jesus was irredeemable we qualify the redemptive power or inclination of God. If there is any sin that carries one beyond the reach of the redeeming love of God, love at that point forfeits its power to justice. To be sure, advantage will be taken of this; that involves a type of evil called by an ancient "presumptuous sin." It holds to a dim view both of justice and of mercy; it is the sort of self-flattery that says because God is what He is and I am what I am, I may act with impunity to the operation of all moral law. Even here are we not forced to the conclusion that though moral law will exact its penalties God's mercy cannot be traduced?

## [ 4 ]

We have no sure way of going back beyond the reported facts of Judas' treachery to the motive that inspired it. It is concerning this factor in the episode that the most charitable and ingenious speculations have been offered. None of them will ever be wholly credible or satisfactory. We can, however, be fairly sure from the accounts, what took place after the motive was fixed, although here also, as we have seen from the record, there is a strange lack of uniformity.

There is a tradition that Judas was a man of property, the only one in the twelve who could be thus described. Also that he was a man of more formal culture than his colleagues. The former fact makes it difficult to believe that the thirty pieces of silver were anything more than a token; the latter fact makes it easy to assume that his motive was not grossly selfish. Thirty pieces of silver amounted to about



eighteen dollars which is unimpressive as a bribe if the death of the Galilean was as important to the rulers as they appeared to think. The pay-off to Judas was therefore meager, particularly if he was not impecunious. Again, making allowances for the difference in land prices between those days and ours, a field bought for eighteen dollars could hardly have been thought a big deal in real estate. Even though, as has already been intimated, Judas might have thought it a likely investment, it was by no means a large one. In other words, there is a wide disparity between the act of the betrayer and the reward he got for it.

If the evil deed did not offer much money compensation, it offered less in satisfaction. His low artifice paid off in personal tragedy, either by self-destruction (Matthew) or by accident (Acts). Curiously enough it has been noted that suicide, which in those times was common among the Greek and Roman population, was very rare among the Jews. The reasons for self-destruction among aliens were many and relatively trivial. For a Jew to take his own life represented either derangement or profound spiritual disturbance. There is a clear indication in the Acts account that the strange end of Judas created something of a sensation. "It became known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem" (Acts 1:19). If this was a correct report of public reaction to an accidental death, it is surely out of proportion to what the public generally feels. If we follow the account in Matthew we find a less explicit reference to public reaction to the sensational death, but the statement that the returned money was allocated to the purchase of a potters' field for the burial of strangers, allows the inference that his death definitely had unusual public notice. About all that can be clearly seen and said is that the act of Judas, if it was thought by him to promise any financial advantage, was a colossal blunder. He lost his life; his real estate venture was condemned to unprofitable uses. The loss was complete both to the buyer and to the bought. One might suggest that among the multitude of shrines in and about the Holy City the site of the Field of Blood might well be indicated by a memorial to all betrayers.

## [ 5 ]

This survey, since it can get no deeper into Judas' experience than the external facts of the record, is unsatisfactory. The nature of his remorse

and the reasons for it, and the deep meaning of his suicide to redress the evil he had committed, these are not available to us. There are, however, two things that it is important to note. The first concerns what might be called the operation of the moral law, or what the pagan world of his time called Nemesis. This can be evinced by the facts in the record. The second concerns the altogether speculative—though far from unimportant—question of the possible meaning of the sin of Judas to the redemptive enterprise.

The Moral Law, Nemesis to the Greeks, Dharma to the Hindu, and justice to the culture we call distinctly our own, comes as near as it is possible to come to what we have been calling the faith of naturalism. It is essentially a quantitative assessment of evil, or disorder, and a quasi-automatic adjustment to it. That there is operative in human life something that can be discerned and described in such terms represents an important stage in the development of human thought and action. To one to whom life has presented itself in such terms, no act can ever be thought indifferent or isolated from the moral plexus. It is the one constant factor among the moral variables represented by diverse cultures. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is a formulation of a principle that is accepted, anthropologists tell us, by all societies from the primitive level to the highly formalized. The two questions concerning which the greatest variation of answer occurs are: Who or what is the responsible agent of the moral law—natural process, man, gods, or God? and What is the relation of time to its operation? The former is of less practical importance than the latter. It makes little difference who holds the club if the stroke is sure to fall, or who extends the award if the guerdon is sure.

Because the operation of moral law, though never doubted, is imprecise, it is a rock of stumbling to many. There is the time lag, for example. This encourages some to risk its action because in so many observable cases, right goes unrewarded and evil unpunished. Even where it is possible to keep a long perspective open and to judge the ultimate issues of moral actions in the light of history, there is always a margin of doubt that cannot be argued away. Hence the disposition to defer the final accounting to a post-history summary, to the forgetting, oftentimes, that in an inescapable sense, every act is instantaneously laid under an immutable judgment none can escape or



appease. The record indicates that in the case of Judas the pledges of the moral law he had flouted lost little time in forcing payment; but for one Judas there seem to be a thousand Pilates.<sup>3</sup>

Besides the timelag there is the matter of the inexact balances so easily observed. The reward for virtue is as modest as the punishment for sin is meager. It should not be so. Virtue should be so spectacularly recompensed that it would invite partisans; sin so condignly punished that it would discourage practitioners. Yet too often evil gets only a slap on the wrist and goodness languishes unnoticed, urged to take comfort in the pious maxim that "virtue is its own reward." Perhaps; but human nature being what it is, more tangible returns would be more appreciated.

These are the twin difficulties that a *quid pro quo* concept of the operation of moral law encounters. They represent the old problem that is involved in every attempt to understand qualitative matters in quantitative terms. We shall never wholly escape it, and even so it is good to live intuitively, if in no deeper sense, under the realization of a natural moral law that does require the proper payments for sin and properly reward our all-too-modest achievements of virtue.

[ 6 ]

And yet can we leave Judas in the grip of this order and claim anything better for ourselves simply because we have not stooped to so hideous a sin as his? We do not think so. For those who are sensitive to the deeper implications of his act for the Christian doctrine of redemptive love, we must go further. Judas died for his evil deed. But he also repented of it. He bought a field with his tainted silver. But he also took his life to expiate his sin. He may seem to have tried to make his way along the road that would return him to the grace of God, in stumbling and uncertain steps. But we must ask the question whether he was stumbling toward the light or into the nether darkness, and upon our answer to that depends largely our understanding of the meaning of redemptive love.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the legend that Pilate retired in good health and with his accumulated wealth bought a lake in what is now North Italy where he lived to a ripe old age. His only disability was an irresistible urge to wash his hands endlessly in the waters of his private lake.

Again we must be careful lest we do for his efforts toward self-redemption what we could not do for his sin, namely, assign a motive. But we can ask what, in general, it is that urges man to seek reconciliation of any sort. In so far as estrangement is painful of itself and a sense of separation from one's fellows is intolerable, it can be assigned to the gregarious instinct that every individual feels. This may be on a level no higher than the herd, or the pack, or it may be as high as the community of the beloved, or a sense of oneness with the Divine. Anything, whether it be one's own sin or the failure of another that interrupts fellowship, is to be repudiated. So man, sinning against his fellow and suffering for it, will make amends. Crude sometimes, and no more than a votive or propitiative offering, but its intention is the restoration of the broken fellowship.

The recorded experience of Judas is instructive here. The spring that activated his impulse to repent was his discovery, not that Jesus was dead, but that he was condemned. As a matter of fact, the sentence of death that had been passed was by the "chief priests and the elders of the people." Not until the sentence was confirmed by the word of Pilate was Jesus doomed to die, and it was in the interval between the first and second sentences that Judas, already convicted of the evil he had done, "repented himself," and returned the thirty shekels to the rulers.

To be sure, taken in themselves the words "repented himself" may mean no more than that he changed his mind concerning the wisdom of a stratagem he had stupidly contrived. And yet this is quibbling about language in the light of what he actually did. The acknowledgment to himself of an error of judgment could presumably have induced him, in an honest moment, to return the money he no longer deserved since he had changed his mind about his bargain; but to go out and hang himself was, by any test, a drastic way to prove his chagrin at his folly. There seems to be no credible explanation of Judas' mood and act except that he was genuinely contrite.

It is our contention that it was and is an understanding of recompense for evil, understood in terms alien to the redemptive tradition of Israel, that has dismissed Judas' case as a simple operation of the moral law. The feeling that persists, namely, that there could have been no forgiveness for Judas, seems to have operated in the minds of those who



shared the event or spoke of it in the decades following. And yet is it not strange that an evil so hideous could have been thought compensated for by the death of the betrayer? Even Dante's allocation of the man to the nethermost depths of hell fails to come to terms with the enormity of the crime. For we must not forget, that the participants in this tragedy believed first that Judas had betrayed their friend, and later came to believe he had given up the Messiah to death, and finally that Judas had sold God to the rulers for a fistful of silver coins. To betray a friend was a hateful thing; to betray the Messiah was a fateful thing; to betray God to physical death—think what wreckage that could have made in their computations if they had estimated what finally happened to Judas as a proper moral *quid pro quo*!

This takes us back again to the quantitative settlement of the problem of sin. Nemesis, in this case, would seem to have fallen far short of a fair quantitative settlement. As well might one estimate the value of the betrayal kiss at \$18.00. Judas' sin was not a transaction, it was a perversion, and nemesis, no more than justice, can strike an exact balance in such a case.

If then nemesis, or justice, was not up to dealing with this case to the satisfaction of our most elementary sense of fairness, what was to take hold? We have said that the Hebrew-Christian tradition of a God of justice and mercy, of judgment and forgiveness, was a great ethical advance over the quantitative moral adjustments of paganism. But how, one asks, can redemption which is the operation of both judgment and love, be invoked in behalf of this evil man? It comes down to a very simple question and allows, we think, a very simple answer.

The question may be put in terms of the strong Christian tradition that makes Jesus not only the Incarnate Son, but God Himself. The theological problem involved in this has no place here. We deal with a much less complex ethical problem. How could God forgive such an act of treachery against His son? If we say that He could not, we disallow to God what in certain cases we have allowed to the heroic forgiveness of human fathers.<sup>4</sup> But could God forgive an act of treachery against Himself? This is the nub of the problem of forgiveness. What we are expected to do, if we are to live in terms of redemptive love, is to forgive those that trespass against *us*. It may be difficult

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the point in Alan Paton, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, on which the story turns.

to forgive one who has misused a friend, but it is far easier than forgiving one who has misused us. On this point Jesus himself spoke the definitive word and gave the most memorable demonstration of it in his prayer of forgiveness on the cross. "Unto seventy times seven" reads the description of redemptive love, of the moral sensitiveness which recognizes and protests the wrong, and of the love that forgives. To put then our question: Could Judas have been redeemed? The answer must be: yes. Was he? How can we answer that question about anyone? That seems to be evasive. So be it. What we must accept, however, is that the failure of nemesis as a just instrument of the adjustment of man's sin to God's law, was made good by the redemptive love of God. This is the meaning of grace as it relates to man's salvation, grace that cannot be turned aside by any evil, not even the evil that essays to destroy God Himself.

If Judas could not have been redeemed, nemesis was the best that could be hoped for and would therefore have represented the highest possible judicial instrument in the hands of God. Thus Judas' self-destruction would have been regarded an act of moral nobility since he did the uttermost a man could do in order to expiate a sin that redemptive love was unable to forgive.

[ 7 ]

In an earlier chapter we considered the ways in which evil can be mitigated. Since any trespass on man's sense of freedom is to him evil, he will undertake in various ways to transmute limitation, disappointment, pain, etc., into values which may be used to extend his sense of freedom. Death, regarded as the most inescapable and immitigable of all evils, can be understood, we believe, in such a way as to make of it also an experience of liberation; not only liberation from physical life, but liberation within eternal life. And we have said that sin is the apex of the pyramid of evil, thrusting its point insolently toward the heavens, defying, in the excess of mortal pride, the moral integrity and purpose of God.

How can this be mediated? On this point, naturalism has nothing to say except the inference that since this is a universe of natural laws, man's behavior is in some way ordered or disordered in terms of what may be called moral law. But this judgment will be tentative. Only



within the experience of religion can man's sin be dealt with, either as in pagan faiths, by a nemesis that pursues man to his doom or a dharma that awards in strict justice man's merits and demerits. Within the orbit of the Hebrew-Christian tradition, room is made for something higher than this. It is made explicit in the concept of the redeeming love of God. Here redemption is not indifference to man's deliberate and proud defiance of the will of God. It is not soft, irresponsible amiability, a lazy tolerance. It is love, a love so resolute and invincible that it cannot only make the wrath of man to praise Him but can make the pride of man to serve His purposes.

To be sure, this raises as many questions as it answers but one thing must be allowed: if God is all-inclusive, dynamic, creative, and loving, He must be able, in ways that transcend our powers of understanding, to win the ultimate victory over all forms of evil, all the way from man's annoyance to his moral rebellion. It is unthinkable that God can, within His created universe, suffer defeat. Even man's destruction of himself cannot really destroy him, if he is the creature of God. God makes redemption integral to creation; neither can be possible without the other. However bitter the moral defeat that we acknowledge for ourselves, we cannot impute defeat to Him.

It is impossible to justify moral evil; it cannot be said that it is a form of good, nor, do we think, it can be transformed into good. In this respect moral evil differs from evil in its other manifestations, and for this reason something external to man must mitigate it. Few will deny that the process of transmuting some forms of evil into relative good is as positive and genuine an advance from immaturity to maturity as is the advance from mistaken ideas to correct ones. By such processes we learn to deal with evil on certain levels and thus learn to live more richly. This is measurably true also in the improvement it is possible for us to make in the moral life, learning by our failures; for by doing right we learn how to do better. And yet the ultimate adjudication of sin is not in our own hands. In so far as we partake of the divine life we are participants in the sum of power God represents. If God is dynamic, so also are we. But our power is never so great as we think it is, therefore it cannot do for us all that needs to be done. In dealing with evil on the nonmoral levels man's

power has been prodigious. Out of his sense of limitation a structure of individual and social order has been fashioned; out of his pain has been drawn wisdom that enables him to protect himself and heroism that has ennobled him. But the power to subdue to the will of God the living soul, the vital self, that is man's glory and his shame, is not his. Recall that we pointed out that this endowment was significantly left out of the story of man's commission to dominate the created world. Not that he is powerless, but that he is not powerful. He can achieve acts of moral nobility but in the very moment of nobleness the spring of egoism will be tripped and release the corruption of pride. It is for this reason that while man must, as far as possible, repent and make reparations, even as Judas did, this can never be enough.

Furthermore, it is because God is not only power but is love that His grace is made available to man in his impotent and unredeemed state. In human experience power and love are integrated even to those situations in which love is discovered to be man's most powerful endowment. How much more then, in a faith that sees God as dynamism and love, will there be made available for redemption the divine love manifest as power, or the divine power manifest as love.

We must agree that this is perhaps the most intractable idea for the modern mind, accustomed to moral law in terms of nemesis, to deal with. And yet the sheer necessity of the shape and pressure of our times demands that something better than "an eye for an eye" be found. In default of such a discovery vengeance is sure to multiply until its aggregate of ruin will, as in the legend of Medea's Athens, encompass everything. The doctrine of the redemptive love of God is very ancient but it is very hard because it demands that the self shall recognize and affirm its impotence to save itself; that all man's necessary contrition, and self rebuke, and reparation cannot ultimately save him. Only by dying to self—and here even the symbol of the suicide of Judas casts a pale light on our darkness—shall he live, and live only by the grace of God.

This is hard medicine for our world to swallow. We will put it aside in impatience and pride, but the moment we do so the "angel of the darker drink" appears at our side and bids us quaff his poison. Will we drink?



## *Chapter XIV*

### God and Immortality

IT IS one thing to work the mind around to the point of accepting physical death as a point at which life transfers, so to speak, from one vehicle to another or, to continue the figure, changes, at the end of one line to another, that leads, perhaps, in another direction, but which presumably, may go on forever. This, we say, is a matter of setting death in new perspectives. But it is another matter to take hold of the post-mortem segment of the problem and bring it into clear focus. Within the religious tradition that shapes our thinking death is a means to life; a door, a narrow road. It is not the end of life, whether end is taken to mean the last of a series of episodes or the intention and conclusion of a process.

#### [ 1 ]

But after death, what? When we confront this endlessly engaging and remorseless question, we observe three moods in those who feel it important to give an answer. There is the skepticism that is the proper attitude of the laboratorian. He observes the behavior of a living organism and notes that at a certain point, for reasons he may or may not know, its vital processes are arrested and unless they can be revived, the result will be death. Once dead there is nothing to be seen except the brief and relatively meaningless disintegration of tissue into inorganic compounds that will eventually lose identity in their assimilation by other entities, living or dead. The observer is therefore compelled, by the canons of scientific research, to say that what he cannot establish as real by the methods he uses, cannot be regarded as real, no matter how fascinating the idea may be.

This skeptical attitude, which is the safeguard that prevents science from becoming the occasional mistress of charlatanry and thus producing the nondescript progeny that always issues from that casual misalliance, becomes dogmatic sometimes, beyond its rights. Thus we encounter the magisterial positivism that insists that nothing *is* real that is not caught on counter, dial, graph, or other miscellaneous registers. When psychology says that all man's thoughts about afterdeath are ego-projections or escape fantasies, we have something that in itself is pure conjecture, however plausible it sounds.

Added to the proper mood of skepticism and the dubious mood of dogmatism we have what is more or less the common-sense view of the matter. It lacks both the skill to do research and the spirit to pontificate. It confesses to its longings on the one hand, and to its frustrations on the other. If life has been grim, niggardly, unfair, it hopes for a better deal when the present hand is played; if it has been gay, generous, decent, it wants no interruption by the insolence of death. Withal it cannot make sense when it tries to think in terms other than the spacetime to which it is habituated. Whatever logic may say, imagination is speechless. How can the mind accustomed to the energetic ticking of timepieces and the inert and unbreached barriers of space think in any other terms? Plato said that beyond time was changelessness and beyond space was immobility. What can that mean to those to whom life is understood in terms of change and motion?

We do not quarrel with these moods nor do we think it important to change them. They may be helpful to us as we undertake to look at immortality within the framework of a faith that sees God as the highest meaning of all that we know. Each of them represents a faith, faiths—if we trust in the veracity of much testimony—that are widely held. The responsibility of those who hold to what they regard as a higher faith because of the component elements of all-inclusiveness, power, cohesion, and love in its idea of the nature of God, is to give the reason for the faith that is in them.

[ 2 ]

Consider the word *immortality*. At once we note that it is the negative form of *mortality*: immortal means not mortal. What then does *mortal* mean? Its derivation is very simple: mortal is a combination of



*mort* and *al*. The first syllable means *death*, the second means *pertaining to*. So also fatal pertains to fate, mental pertains to mind, and so on, *ad infinitum*. Thus mortal life pertains to death. This is exactly what the man with the microscope has been gently reminding us all the time.

We are involved in an interesting logical difficulty here if we wish to prove that mortality and immortality are both true concepts. It is logically impossible to prove as true the opposite of something else that is proved as true. If A is true, and if not-A is the opposite of A, I cannot prove that both A and not-A are equally true. If I can prove that I am mortal, and there is surely no problem there, then—if immortality is regarded as the opposite of mortality, I not only cannot prove it to be true; in the nature of the case it cannot be true. And this is exactly what the logical positivist has been telling us all the time. If, he asks, the existence of life pertains to death, how can it pertain to not-death?

How are we to get around this difficulty? The first step involves recognition that we use these words inexactly when we talk about our problem. Thus: we use the experiences that describe mortality, such as birth, food, play, reproduction, pain, etc., that are within spacetime and then, when we talk of immortality, we use these same experiences in a select and glamorized form as a picture of life beyond spacetime. On earth, as mortals, we walk—in space, of course; as immortals we fly. Whether we fly in space or not is unimportant since the notion of being airborne carries the sensation of emancipation from the limitations of space movement. This fancy—for such it is—is hardly more than a stepping-up of the movement we know within the spacetime construct so that it seems to escape it. The bizarre notions that this allows are commonplace to much of the fantasy we indulge on the subject. We will have wings; we will live in endless light because time is no longer divided into periods of light and dark. But this fancied transcendence of spacetime by feathers and unclocked time does not remove the logical roadblock we have encountered; it simply allows us in imagination to fly over it.

The second step, after realizing that we use words imprecisely, is to ask whether, after all, we really need these words *mortality* and *immortality*. Mortality is a word that clearly comes from man's preoccupation with the processes of exhaustion, disintegration, degeneration,

and dissolution, which he calls death. Life, he says, pertains to death. Man is mortal. Immortality is a word that is created out of man's refusal to think of himself as pertaining to death. Call this refusal an intuitive response to something beyond the reach of his mind, or call it a defiance of death.<sup>1</sup> It makes little difference. "He thinks he was not made to die," said Tennyson, and so he does. And yet he cannot conceive of immortality outside the spacetime contingencies within which life pertains to death. This dilemma has been met in two ways: it has been denied that death exists: it is illusion, the thought itself being a form of evil. Similarly it has been denied that immortality is possible: it too is illusion, the thought itself being evil to the extent to which self-deception is evil. Perhaps we can find words that state our case more exactly. We do not need to deny the fact of mortality, but we may be able to discover, in common usage, a word that puts the situation within a somewhat different perspective.

[ 3 ]

Observe that the word the naturalist uses is not mortality. His problem is, for obvious reasons, simpler than ours. He is concerned with life as a function and a process directed toward the preservation and continuance of life forms. He will perhaps pretty widely agree with Haldane that "from the physical standpoint, life is a standing mystery." Even so he has not been awed by mystery; with great patience and ingenuity he has sought and discovered and described—and in some cases, altered its processes and functions.

The problem of the naturalist has been considerably extended within the last half century by the development of the new physics and the intrusion of this discipline into other scientific fields. Hence biophysics and chemophysics are standing alongside the biochemistry that formed the first coalition. This is due to the fact that all observable phenomena, life and nonlife, are now known to have one common basic quality: they are the exhibition of the interaction of radioactive particles. Everything, we are now told, is a dance of atoms. Now the pertinent fact that this establishes for our study is that these radioactive particles (or

<sup>1</sup> In this connection recall the Freudian emphasis on the "death wish" which insists that subconsciously we all want to die and as often, almost, wish the death of others. This is adduced in support of the argument against post-mortem survival.



units of energy—the point is unclear) are indestructible. How mass is converted into energy even Mr. Einstein does not know, but when he announced his formula that energy *was* mass multiplied by the square of the speed of light he said there were three ways in which the formula could be proved. One was by the release of energy through splitting the atom. The resulting atom bomb is now no mystery, though why the scattered particles in an atom give off heat (and lose mass) in their flight, is still a secret hidden even from the nuclear physicists. Mass is lost in energy, we are told, but the energy balance is maintained and the particles, though transformed, are not destroyed. This, they say, is true of everything in the universe. If this *is* true of everything, then nothing can be destroyed, and if death has meant destruction—as it has for most of us—we must now say that nothing dies. Mortality, which means “pertaining to death,” ceases to be an accurate description of anything. This, it must be agreed, is a tremendous idea.

So compendious an invention would be expected to bring new meaning to everything. Thus the relevance of the phenomenon of indestructibility is sought more and more widely. There are two areas where research into *energy*—for that is now the key word of science, something never to be described as mortal or as immortal—is yielding exciting results. They come from the hypothesis that everything we know is radioactive. We shall confine our interest to those aspects of the current problem that deal with the survival of personality after death.

Man's body, like everything else, is composed of atoms of radioactive energy. When the body “dies” this energy is not lost or dissipated. While it is “alive” it is able to respond to its environment because its environment is also radioactive, and because man's physical mechanism is an adequate receptor for low-frequency vibrations. All his sensations are responses to low-frequency radiations, but man has made machines that can receive and record very high frequencies. The radio tube is the commonest of these new devices, perhaps. Other waves, of extremely high frequency, such as X rays, gamma rays, and cosmic rays, are hard to receive because their frequency count is so high, or put in terms of wave lengths, so short.

Now it has been established that there are certain high frequency radiations that have unexplained origins, and that there are some human bodies that are able to receive such energy radiations and re-

spond to them. In this area of research the opportunity for fraud and error is so great that experiments are being carried on with greatest caution and secrecy. But the hypothesis generally accepted by those physicists thus engaged is that enormously high frequency waves may emanate from "invisibles" or "sensitives" that once lived in mortal flesh but now, through with that instrument, are able to emit energy waves to others who are similarly equipped to receive them.

This is so daring an invention that without the detailed data before one it is easy to dismiss it as sorcery, black magic, or the like. This accounts for the reticence of researchers in presenting their findings as they come to light. Every time an intimation of such a possibility reaches public print it invites a spate of denial and even ridicule. And yet it is here given as the word of one of the nation's foremost experts in radioactivity who must remain anonymous, that crude (the word is accurate though hardly descriptive) instruments have already been devised which have captured such emanations from "invisibles." This amounts to saying that already communication has been established mechanically with discarnate persons.

It is easy to poohpooh this amazing disclosure and to recall the charlatans and frauds who have been exposed in this field. The late Harry Houdini never had to pay the \$10,000 he had posted as a forfeit if he could not duplicate any feat of any medium. The concern to protect the gullible from fraud is very important and yet it should not shield us from such facts as have been scientifically tested and established.

Certain facts in this field, once regarded as belonging to witchcraft, have now achieved scientific respectability of a high order. Studies in extrasensory perception—which means simply the receiving of sensation without the physical sensorium—have established telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and retrocognition as recognizable and empirical phenomena.<sup>2</sup> However such information is subject to misuse, the facts

<sup>2</sup> A popularized summary of the accepted scientific results achieved in this field appeared in *The New York Times Magazine* of June 11, 1950. It was written by S. G. Soal, senior lecturer in pure mathematics at Queen Mary College, University of London. *Inter alia* he says: "These facts have suggested to many the theory that though our brains and bodies are situated in space, our minds being non-material, have no connection with space at all. . . . There is also a good deal of experimental evidence which strongly suggests that to some extent it [thought transference] is independent of time. . . . Unless the scientists are prepared to postulate that a great many persons of high academic standing are either knaves or fools, they are bound to accept telepathy as a fact of nature."



are available for those who wish to have them. That it is possible, without the use of a physical medium, to transfer ideas, may now be taken as definitely established.

Beyond this, though somewhat less conclusively formulated, is the auxiliary data concerning the movement of physical objects by non-physical instruments or energies. By means of the light corpuscle and/or the sound wave we have light and sound and they are convertible into kinetic energy. But there are phenomena resulting from energy that seem to have no physical medium or source. Gross objects are moved; a sensitized medium's voice is activated, and even (though here the data is still meager though promising) what is called a non-laryngeal voice is heard. Once again the caution against careless use of such possibilities is very necessary. This lies in an area where human inquiry of the nonscientific sort is very active. Who is there that is not interested in this amazing thing—the possibility of extrasensory communication with those who have passed the shadowed doors of death? What cruelty lurks in the efforts to deceive or exploit such universal and normal longings! How gullible we all are; how gullible indeed have some wise men been. And yet, if there is something here, as highly competent and excessively cautious men, who have been working at the problem for many years with increasingly sensitive apparatus, tell us, then our fears of being taken in by a phony should not deter us from following as far as skilled and responsible investigation leads.

In a word, what is it that this seems to offer us? That the abandonment of the physical body as we know it does not destroy the essential integrity it had while living. This is a scientific conclusion. Whether this core of essence be called the ego, the soul, the personality or whatever, makes little difference. In such a new area of exploration, vocabularies are inadequate and old familiar words prove unable to carry the weight of new connotations. We can, we believe, accept without qualification the fact that since all sensory communication is the manifestation of low-frequency energy radiations while we are in the flesh, there may be scientific grounds for holding that communication after death is possible where there is available sufficiently sensitive apparatus for receiving these, as yet, incalculably high-frequency emanations. Scientists, who are both expert and fantastically cautious, have allowed us to know that much. Knowing that, we can only keep our minds

open for what may be in the offing. What we do see clearly, however, is that the words *mortal* and *immortal* are either now obsolete or are to be vested with new meanings.

[ 4 ]

The new word of science is *energy* and it contains no hint of the ideas of exhaustion, disintegration, depletion, or—in other words—death. The faith that finds the highest meaning to all that we know in terms of the primary energy of the physical universe, has shed a bright beam on man's hitherto dismal reflections on the inevitability of his destruction. This may be enough, though its implications for personal survival have not been openly avowed by any considerable number of scientists. This may be caution; it may be diffidence. One scholar—the anonymous informer referred to above—has called it cowardice. To the writer's surprise he remarked, after the sessions of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in St. Louis in 1945: "If the men assembled here had courage proportionate to their knowledge they would announce that the 'immortality of the soul' was now within reach of definitive scientific proof." This will seem even to the non-scientific as an undeserved and perhaps unsupported criticism of his fellows, but it was conscientiously advanced by one of the top-flight scientists of this country.

It is not to be expected, however, that the religious hypothesis of immortality will accept energy and its indestructibility as substitute words—or even ideas—for those designations and ideas to which the religious mind is inured. We shall not abandon mortality and immortality for all the logical difficulty they involve. That is not the way words happen. Immortality, a negative concept, will still act as stand-in for positive ideas and hopes. And yet, we think there is ground in the Christian revelation for significant change in language. The word of Paul which has already been discussed at length—"Jesus Christ hath abolished death"—would seem to cancel any necessity for holding fast either to the idea of death or of not-death. If the former is abolished, so is its opposite, since not-death only has meaning in a context within which death has meaning. Furthermore, as has been said, both life and immortality have been illumined (Paul's figure of speech) through the gospel. Life (*zoen*) which is the state of being alive, and what physics



would call radioactivity or electromagnetism; and immortality (*aphithasia*), the state of being uncorrupted or what physics call indestructibility, have had new light cast upon them. In terms of the Christian tradition this means that while the business of living can be perverted by our involvement in spacetime and our prideful ego, it cannot be destroyed. It will keep going and pass eventually out of the borders of corruption into incorruption. There are then not two kinds of life, mortal and immortal; there is one kind, subject to corruption in spacetime but incorruptible in nonspacetime. Sin, which is the corruption of the unredeemed ego, and limitation, which is inevitable within spacetime, are, under the redemptive power and love of God, transmuted into freedom. Is death the quick hot flame that purges the soul of its dross, or the icy bath that shocks the soul out of its lethargy? This is figurative language, to be sure, but not, for that reason, unreal.

## [ 5 ]

If *energy* is the word of the faith of science, *God* is the word of the faith of religion. But not God used in abstraction but in life. Indeed there is a way in which *life* is the perfect synonym for God. "In Him was life," "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Whatever else God is, He is manifest to us in life in all the ways to which the human body and mind have been sensitized. In energy (radioactivity); in beauty, goodness, and truth; in order, purpose, love; and perhaps (for we must not limit the life action of God to the categories to which our life action is familiar) in ways for which we have no words since our apprehension of them is meager. Why, except for its unfamiliarity and its superstitious association with spooks, should communication with the dead—as it is conventionally described—be attributed to some evil thing? Why indeed should one not look forward to the invention of supersensitive receptors as toward a door that will open into the ultimate arcanum? Paul's vision of a time when we shall know even also as we are known was not a postulate of a post-mortem life. It was the final achievement of love,<sup>3</sup> love that in his inspired insight was imperishable. "Love never fails."

God, Life, Love—these are so inseparable in the Christian view as to be all but indistinguishable. God's life is love expressing itself in crea-

<sup>3</sup> I Cor. 13:12-13.

tion. Indifference, inaction, inertia, or malfeasance could not create. God's love is life expressing itself in an all-pervading and all-including purpose. This is the most ancient of man's religious insights, perhaps. It is interesting that in the opinion of at least one distinguished scientist, it is not incompatible with his secular faith.<sup>4</sup> Is purpose possible without intelligence that presupposes alternates from which choice can be made? And is not love's life a manifestation of God as it reveals itself in spacetime by order, law, discipline; by values, by standards—ethical and aesthetic? And what is judgment when we seem, so to speak, to be shaken violently by the mighty hand of God; and what is redemption, when that hand is laid on us in forgiveness? To the question as to whether one believes in immortality the answer may be fully given by saying that one believes in God. This evades nothing, and, in the light of what has gone before, can be regarded as saying everything that the subject allows.

## [ 6 ]

The fact that we do not use energy as the scientist does to describe the core-essence of life does not mean that the word we do use makes no room for the idea of energy. We have repeated many times that God who provides us the highest meaning for all that we know is dynamic, power, energy, force. We have just spoken of the element of love in His nature. Again He *is* love, as He *is* power; and the positive aspect of His love is its creativity. No reason, worthy of the prodigy of creation, describes it so well as love in action, for the *reason* for creation is *love* just as the agent of creativity is power. Beyond this is the component we have called cohesion. Not a different energy but another aspect of it, cohesiveness is a manifestation of power. Nuclear physicists tell us that the two hundred and thirty-five particles (or foci of energy) that make up the now famous uranium atom do not represent a stable unity. They are, as it is sometimes put, an unhappy family of two hundred and thirty-five members, endlessly bombarding one another, pushing, colliding, reeling about in the wildest disorder. But

<sup>4</sup> Henry Fairfield Osborn: "If I have made a single contribution to biology which I feel is permanent, it is the profession that living nature is purposive; that Democritus was wrong in raising the hypothesis of fortuity and that Aristotle was right in claiming that the order of living things as we know them precludes fortuity and demonstrates purpose." From *The Creed of a Naturalist: The Earth Speaks to Bryan*.



they stay together! This is an extraordinary and unexplained fact. What holds them in an inviolable atom if they are not disturbed by external force? This we do not know; but when a neutron, propelled by whatever force, smashes from the outside with such velocity that the mass of quarrelsome particles flies apart, then flight transforms them into the prodigious heat we have come to know both as the destructive power of the A-bomb, and as the promise that the uranium pile holds for productive uses. Here is cohesion in the ultimate units of the physical universe, yet it is without explanation. It requires no great exercise of faith to assume that God is that unitive power, a power that holds together and is not spent in the wild scattering of the bombarded atom.

We have spoken of these components of God in this connection because it is our belief that they are not only exhibited in the phenomena of radioactivity and the indestructibility of energy, but that in so far as man is a created being, sharing in the nature of God, he also exhibits these divine qualities, and, by analogy, he too is indestructible. We must go further than that. All creation is of God; all life is incarnation, infusion, impregnation, impersonation of God. What man, in his egoism, claims for himself, he must, in his humility, allow to all life. This is what Albert Schweitzer has made the basis of his philosophy of civilization. Life, because it is of God, demands reverence no matter how lowly its forms. It can be set aside only to allow some more highly organized and meaningful form of life to pass. So this jungle-saint will not destroy a wild beast, or a reptile, or even an insect or plant unless in so doing he believes he is clearing the way for a "better" life. He concedes that this is not an easy philosophy and ethic to live by for man's judgment about the respective values in various forms of life is always qualified by his own egoistic wish to live. But he constantly reminds himself that every living thing in the Lambaréné wilderness would, if it were consulted and could speak, plead only for one thing: the right to live.

It should follow, then, that if we, as human creatures, are thus endowed, the more we live in spacetime creatively, lovingly, cohesively, the more we are like God and the less death means. Spacetime becomes for us the interval through which we pass. For the moment we are thrall to time, but the moment will pass and we shall be like God "for we shall see Him as He is." This will not require a changed essence,

for we have been *of* God ever since the creative instant; it will require liberation and vision for with the former we will be set free to do what the latter of God will compel us irresistibly to do. Hence, in the spacetime continuum it is man's glory (under the judgment of God) if he lives creatively; it is man's peril if he assumes he is God. The moral peril involved in man's new creative powers as represented by his ability literally to make stars by transforming hydrogen into helium, is very great. He will make the H-bomb (create a star) but in that ingenious and godlike act he will be playing with world destruction. Should he fear too much or boast too greatly, he will obliterate himself.

## [ 7 ]

So we may set aside the word *immortality* and put *life* in its place, life full of all the connotations that we have described. This orients us toward God, who is the object of our faith, and toward the processes of creativity which are the essence of our meaning. What then? We discover that we have encountered certain scientific affirmations regarding life (its radioactive character) that gear into the timeless affirmations of religious faith. There is immortality that the physics laboratory has discovered though it goes by another name. There is life that the Christian saint has discovered that does not need to be described as immortal since it is of God. Here is an important convergence.

Does life continue for me? Am I, in the more familiar form of the question, immortal? I answer, yes. I can corrupt the life that has been given me by the creator. This is the measure and the credential of my freedom, of the individuation of my ego from the will, both of God and of all other creatures. But I cannot destroy life; my credentials carry no such prerogatives even if I wished to indulge the impulse.

## [ 8 ]

To summarize: It has been pointed out that the language we use to convey our ideas and feelings about the mystery of life and death is not clear and involves a logical contradiction that cannot be resolved. For this reason we have asked whether other words are available for carrying the load of idea and feeling, and if so, what they are. Our interest in natural science reveals that the new concepts of nuclear physics—new in the sense that they have been given new validity—



have reduced the essence of all being to radioactive energy which is indestructible. Here is a sort of immortality that can be empirically established. This deals not alone with physical entities but with psychic phenomena as well, and we are led to believe that the physical body which can receive low-frequency radioactive impulses through the five senses may be able to receive high-frequency impulses in a way that is, for the moment, described as extrasensory. It is even possible that persons who have passed beyond the physical phase of life without having lost the radioactive essence of their being can communicate by means of high-frequency radiation with living persons who are sufficiently sensitive to receive them. The long identification of such phenomena with black art and the novelty of its advancement by careful and qualified scientists must not be allowed to turn us away from the possibilities that may be found within this approach to the mystery of survival. Furthermore, if God is to be understood as all-inclusive He is, in nonscientific terms, as universally operative and timeless as indestructible radioactive energy. If He is cohesive, He exhibits on the spiritual as well as on the physical level the force that keeps the atom together; and if He is love, His activating and cohesive energy is expressed in all the vast enterprise of creating and sustaining the universe. There is therefore a convergence of scientific explanation and the traditional thought forms that have so long contained the essence of religious faith. In so far as man is part of the created order and partakes of its essential energism he is able to pass through the carnate phase of his existence, subject to the limitations of spacetime and the corruptions of the ego, but not destroyed by them. He can indeed be creative, dynamic, and loving, under certain restrictions implicit in his finiteness, and he may become more so by the measure to which he has voluntarily yielded himself to the redemptive energies of God. Thus the indestructibility of his physical and psychic essence finds a parallel in the continuity of his spiritual essence due to his growing identification with the will of the creator. This concept not only appears to converge upon the new understandings science has advanced with reference to physical and psychic phenomena, but offers an understanding of the nature and possibility of human survival that is not embarrassed by the logical difficulties we found in the word *immortality*.

## [ 9 ]

No study of this subject that pretends to set itself within the framework of a faith that finds God as the highest meaning that can be given to all that we know, can omit reference to the giant fact of the Resurrection in the New Testament and the place it has held in all formulations of the Christian testimony concerning personal survival. At once it is interesting to note that the word *immortality* is used only by Paul and then only a scant half-dozen times. Word counting is unimportant in such matters, of course. It is neither a measure of one's interest in a subject nor of his extensiveness in treatment. But the word is interesting on its own.

Three different Greek words are rendered by the single word *immortality*. When Paul speaks of God as immortal (I Timothy 1:17) the word is *aphtharto*, incorruptible. This is used in an apostrophe to God that acclaim Him "eternal, immortal," or ageless and incorruptible, or imperishable. *Indestructible* is quite as accurate a translation. This word is used again (II Timothy 1:10) in the verse already discussed above—"immortality (indestructibility) brought to light in the gospel." The second word (Romans 2:7) is *eternal life* (*zoen aionion*). This too is rendered *immortality*. A third word, *anathasimos* (I Timothy 6:16) which literally means *deathless* is also similarly rendered. The fourth word (I Corinthians 15:53) is used as the opposite of *thynton* (pertaining to death—translated *mortality*) and is again *athanasimos* (deathless). It would appear that the translators have gathered up into the one word *immortality* three ideas: agelessness (beyond time), deathlessness (beyond the mortality that tends to death), and incorruptibility (beyond destruction). At one point Paul assigns these qualities exclusively to God (I Timothy 1:17; 6:16); at another he describes the transition from mortality to immortality as shedding one vesture (*thynton*—mortality) and donning another (*athanasian*—deathlessness: I Corinthians 15:53-54). This process is what those who are "dead in Christ" are to experience.

We may make what we will of the indefiniteness that we see here. There is no equivocation concerning those qualities which God the Eternal possesses nor is there contradiction in the descriptive words. If God is eternal, He is deathless, timeless, indestructible. Nor is there



important stress to be placed on his exclusive reservation of immortality for God in one connection and its availability to those "in Christ" in another. The most that is to be said, perhaps, is that Paul, like everyone else who has confronted this mystery, found the vocabulary of mortal experience inadequate to describe modes that transcend the mortal. At the same time it cannot be doubted that Paul's faith in God meant for him and all who shared his faith, that God was immortal and that man, for that reason also was.

There is another word, however, that occurs with greater frequency and with a uniform meaning. It is *resurrection* (*anastasis*) and it always means "to stand up again." It is used in connection with death: resurrection *from* the dead; and with life: resurrection *to* life. Because of its simple reference to common experience—those who fall get on their feet again—it is a common word. And it gave pictorial representation to many ideas unrelated to death. In the New Testament, however, it is used exclusively with reference to death. The Sadducees argued that once felled by death there was no getting up. This was the way they disposed of the contention of the Pharisees that death was only a temporary prostration. The most significant use of the word by Jesus is found in the Fourth Gospel as he refers to himself as "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). This clearly is intended to refer to death and its aftermath.

It is unnecessary, in this discussion, to go into the interesting question of the relation of Paul's ideas, which represented a formulation earlier than the written Synoptic records, to the later tradition. The point has been made that Paul here reflects his training in the Greco-Roman culture into which he was born. Perhaps; the speculative aspect is indicated in the variety of expressions he uses to state his thoughts. At the same time there is little evidence that the thought of his time was stated in the categories Paul used in his letters. If he was speaking as a Roman, he was certainly imparting an original flavor that was so unique as to make his ideas all but wholly novel.

What we can be fairly confident about, however, is that whether or not the idea of resurrection as we encounter it in the Synoptics is tinted by the Pauline coloring, it was already a lively hope, and it was a hope expressed in a very homely metaphor. Death, we discover, was not the end of a journey, it was falling down on the road. One may

assign any number of reasons for the stumbling: "Rocks of offense," "occasions of stumbling," etc. But one could always get up again!

This, we remind ourselves, is a metaphor, but nonetheless a simple fact. Perhaps then for simple folk it says as much as can be or needs to be said. And in the areas of mystery into which life ushers us, from time to time, can it not be that the simplest response to mystery is likely to be the best? Not best perhaps in terms of the learned descriptions of the behavior of radioactive particles that never die, nor best in terms of the astonishing discoveries of psychic research. These are best for the sophisticated who must take hold of life by its rational end after they have carried it into the laboratory. More power to them.

But to the commonality of men who in faith have made the Eternal One the highest meaning of everything that they know, the question of immortality may be answered—though unexplained—by the word *resurrection*. It is kin to *insurgent* and *resurgent*, sturdy and puissant cognates. And what does it say? Simply this: that life, momentarily bent or prostrate by the fury of mortality, may stand erect again, by the experience of death. To some it is important to discover and describe the wild dance of atoms that never tire and never fall. To us it is enough to believe that

. . . we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "Asolando," Robert Browning.



## Chapter XV

### The Moral Imperative

IT WILL be helpful to hold briefly in retrospect the way we have traveled up to this point. The minds of men in all the important disciplines: philosophy, science, history, and religion, have been steadily converging toward a measure of agreement concerning certain elemental postulates. Whether the reason for this is found in the practical perils under which all our speculations and plannings are carried on these days, or whether in a spirit of sublime detachment from emergency, ideas have fallen into a new pattern, it is not easy to say. Mr. Bernard Baruch, when he presented his celebrated plan for the control of the development of atomic energy said: "It is for us to accept or reject—if we dare—this doctrine of salvation. It springs from stark necessity, and that is inexorable." Julian Huxley in his *Romanes Lecture* (1943) said: "Ethical ideas and practice, phenomena peculiar to human societies, will in due course be themselves subjected to more intimate study. . . . Moral thinking and teaching are not the prerogative of the philosopher and the theologian. . . . The good as well as the true has become a necessary objective of all science."<sup>1</sup> These sentiments can be duplicated from many sources. One swallow does not make a summer, nor indeed do half a dozen flocks, but the more birds, the more justified the expectation of a change of weather.

Every man has his faith. If he does not put one together out of the unorganized fragments of experience that compose his own life, he will take over the faith that has been fabricated by most of those among whom he lives. This may be a high or a low faith, but it will represent a consensus that gives meaning to all that he knows.

<sup>1</sup> *Nature*, November 24, 1945. Quoted by Prof. John A. Ryle in an article entitled "Science and Ethics."

The hypothesis, or as we have sometimes called it, the invention, that God is the highest meaning that can be given to all that we know, has stood over against the naturalistic invention that natural law provides the highest meaning. The quarrel, wherever it was joined, settled neither mooted points nor ruffled tempers, and happily we think, it has been foreclosed for good. Not by agreement but by caution in the presence of the growing profundity within which the ultimate mysteries of life have been found to lie.

There is less reason, therefore, for fearing that the advocacy of the faith that has for three thousand years been at the center of the Hebrew-Christian religion, will invite the scorn with which it was regarded fifty years ago when the faith of scientism was young and vocative. Science has not taken the veil nor has religion donned the white coat, but there is an air, call it nothing more than tolerance or call it as much as spiritual hunger, that is now somewhat more congenial to the measured and sober assertion that God makes the difference.

Because of this our study has undertaken to state certain ways in which God makes the difference: in our understanding of nature, of God Himself, of history, and of man. Similarly, setting the high faith of religion alongside the lesser faiths of the natural sciences, society, the family, government, organized religion, and the market place have come under review. Moving along the same line we encountered God in relation to love, law (limitation and the general problem of evil), death, redemption, and immortality. In some instances it was pointed out that there was a convergence between the faith of science and the faith of religion. At all points it was agreed that religion must and does accept the tested data of science. What has been insisted upon all the time, however, is that both the faith of science, and the established data of science are inadequate to encompass the totality of experience. Where they candidly confess to its lack, religion may, with commensurate humility, offer to supply the deficit. Where this is done, we have contended, God makes the difference.

[ 1 ]

Having said all this, then what? Is it enough to stand our sheets of foolscap on end, pat them caressingly along the upper edge until they settle into the neat conformity demanded for filing, and adjourn with



such satisfactions as the encounter has brought us? This is all that some are inclined to do but it is not enough. There is an element in the faith one espouses that affects behavior. This it may do by acting as a sedative. The realization that an idea has been picked up, turned about and studied from every angle, and exposed to the light as long as there is light, gives a measure of satisfaction that, alas, all too few have known. With no wish to be censorious it can nevertheless be said that this has for the most part been the congenial and cultivated attitude of the faith of pure science. The definitive knowledge of facts is enough, we have been told. What is done with it is the business of the man who wants to use them.

We hear less of this moral irresponsibility, for such it is, than we used to. The destruction of Hiroshima let loose a spate of sermons by scientists that were as encouraging in their approach to a new world situation as they were terrifying in their predictions of what would happen unless the fashioners of such mighty new weapons become morally concerned as to their use. When on November 19, 1947, Dr. Merle A. Tuve of the Carnegie Institution of Washington was awarded the plaque of the Research Corporation for his development of the proximity fuse, he made an address on "Science and the Humanities" that was symptomatic of the change just indicated. The address, unpublished, is full of the solid and realistic wisdom expected of such an eminent scholar, but it contains also some surprises. "The motivations of a man in pure science are essentially aesthetic and ethical, not rational, or materialistic or practical. . . . The roots of action lie less in logic than in faith, and his satisfactions are not in his reason, which is a tool he uses, but in the inner parts of his being, where he contemplates beauty and truth, and his spirit is humbled and enriched." He admits that for many years he has startled his less intimate friends by saying that the basic aim of his own "scientific activity is spiritual satisfaction." He quotes with approval from a talk made the year previous by Professor A. V. Hill of England, speaking on the "Responsibilities of Scientists in Modern Society": "What is needed is the inspiration of a great ideal, a common interest, a common standard of ethical behavior, a common refusal to sacrifice or exploit a universal good for a temporary or sectional advantage. Those who fancy themselves as hardboiled realists, as the practical men who practice the errors of their forefathers,

may deride us and our principles. But the truest form of realism is to recognize that human well-being, indeed the continued existence of human society, depends more on improvement of morality and reasonableness than on invention of machinery or organization." Dr. Tuve's last paragraph contains this sentence: "I think there are a hundred men who can make the problem of human relationships and the essence of the meaning of an individual life as vital and fresh and moving a challenge as biochemistry or nuclear physics."

These somewhat lengthy quotations are important to us because they set the job of the natural sciences within the perspectives of a moral interest and obligation. This is an advance beyond the moral negativism of earlier spokesmen who have insisted that the only moral implications in natural law inhere in the simple nexus between cause and effect. Law makes the difference: conform and survive; defy and be destroyed. No matter how true and inviolable that formula is, it falls short, far short, of coming to terms with the human problem. Suppose man, in his blindness or egotism, falls victim to the causal nexus. He is destroyed; but what is the meaning of man's destruction as contrasted with that of other living creatures. And sometimes he seems able to take the causal nexus in stout hands and rend effect from cause; or, what to him may amount to much the same thing, he may defer the action indefinitely. In so far as these aspects of experience involve man in the exercise of his will, a moral issue is introduced and he must ask of himself and his fellow humans, why he should behave in one way and not another.

[ 2 ]

This is the precise point at which faith in God makes the difference that can be most easily noted. It demands not only assent but action. There is not only an imperative in the ideas that shape up this faith; there is an imperative in the actions that give it meaning and display. Indeed the components we have mentioned as comprising the nature of the Divine, though since He is indivisible they are mentioned singly for only our convenience, are what might be called action components. This gives a slightly different emphasis than purely metaphysical components, and is to be understood as claiming that God's all-inclusiveness, dynamism, cohesion, and love are known to us actively. This means, of course, that they are known to us morally.



It is therefore meaningless to say that God makes no difference morally or that faith in God makes no moral difference with those who have resolved to make Him the highest meaning. Is not this initial act of will—the resolve to make Him the ultimate meaning—the primary moral act? It is the orientation of life toward the highest ideal; from that act all morality follows, and without that act all morality is fictitious. It is this that makes so trenchant the difference, on the moral level, between the faiths of science and religion. There is no metaphysical reality to the natural law which is the object of naturalistic faith. Natural law is a description, not an entity. It therefore has no moral quality and orientation of one's interest or devotion to it, is consequently void of moral connotations. This is true despite the genuine ethical elevation of the dedication of the scientist to the discovery and description of facts. Here the moral quality inheres in the spirit of the searcher, not in the object sought. The faith of science, or of naturalism, does not involve a moral imperative. The concern, of such scholars as have been quoted, that their colleagues in the laboratory shall recognize that the "motivations of the man of pure science are aesthetic and ethical, not rational, or materialistic or practical," is purely subjective. That, as Professor Hill pointed out, "the continued existence of human society depends more on improvement of morality and reasonableness than on invention" is to be accounted for by something he found outside the laboratory and inside himself.

## [ 3 ]

There is no moral imperative in naturalism; there is a moral imperative in faith in God. It becomes necessary, therefore, to ask in what ways this imperative is mediated. There are two distinct ways: the moral tradition that has its rise in the crepuscular beginnings of the Hebrew tradition and finds its fulfillment in the principles set forth in the New Testament; and the funded experience of those who, in the radiance of this great ethical illumination, have created the community of those whose faith is in God.

It is instructive to discover that three of the action components—which means of course moral action—posited of God, are implicit, not only in the first epic story of physical creation but in the second epic story of the creation on the summit of Sinai, of the moral code. The

absence of the fourth is significant. Take the matter of the all-inclusiveness of God. This is made the basis for the primary moral obligation: to put God in a position of total supremacy above all other gods. Even no effigy of Him was to be allowed. We do not say that this is an explicit statement of the high monotheism that was the development ultimately of centuries of thinking about Yahweh. It simply points out that in the introduction of man to the moral obligations he was to recognize toward his fellows, God was to be set up as morally all-inclusive. He was to be all-god or none.

What of power? Here again the intimation is clear. As if by way of documentation, there is introduced into the Decalogue (Exodus 20:11) a quick summary of the creation episode in which by fiat the six-day prodigy was accomplished. So great was the expenditure of the divine energy that a seventh day of rest was necessary and its restorative hours were so completely satisfying that a blessing, in perpetuity, rested on it, and man was commanded to rest one day in seven lest he be too prodigal in the expenditure of his powers.

That He was the element of cohesion in the physical universe is a proper inference from the reference to creation, but that He supplied the social cohesion that was to hold His people together is explicitly stated. So close was their coherence that the sins of the fathers were to be visited on the children unto the third and fourth generations; and love and obedience were to be rewarded by the display of God's loving-kindness unto thousands. The unity of the family—that embryo in which all life's vitalities first stir—was to be guaranteed by filial devotion to father and mother, and the days of such domestic units would be long in the land. The tenth commandment—against covetousness—was clearly the proscription of that state of mind that more than anything else gives rise to the acts that destroy social cohesion.

The action component of love is, as indicated, absent from this first great code. Yahweh is not represented as a tender parent, he is stern, jealous, demanding. The people who saw the display of power and heard the reading of the law, trembled and stood afar off. Indeed they were more ready to risk an encounter with Moses than with the Lord. "And they said unto Moses, speak thou to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us lest we die" (Exodus 2:19). God was hidden from them in "thick darkness" and the law by which they were to live



never lost its somberness until it was illumined by the later concept of love as the energy and meaning of God.

This law, which we are saying carries with it moral imperatives for all whose faith is in God, could not resist the impingement of the social forces that shaped the life of the children of Israel, but it was never wholly lost sight of. In those times when it was corrupted by the pagan codes of neighbor peoples, there arose prophetic voices to call the people back to a recollection of the all-ness, the power, and the cohesive-ness of the holy influence. Often this was spoken in the thundering denunciations of men like Jeremiah, Amos, and Micah who forthtold the issue starkly in terms of the plans of Yahweh to use enemy power to execute His judgments on their apostasy and their pride. But the simple moralism of most of the great prophetic figures was every now and then softened by the recurrent note of the tender mercies of God. Hosea saw in Him one so wholly loving that the most repugnant faithlessness could not abate his concern for the sinner. He was a pitying Father, an understanding and often indulgent Friend. Never, however, to the point of flabby unconcern over moral issues. To those who presumed on His love in order to indulge the folly of self-love, His judgment was as condign as that which was dramatized above Sinai by thunder and lightning, and by the quaking earth at the mountain's base. Thus, in the later periods of Israel's history the law of God came to be understood as a law of justice and mercy, of judgment and love, of penalty and forgiveness.

[ 4 ]

The faith of this great historic tradition survived the final debacle that took from Israel its political integrity. Despite the pressure of the pagan cultures of Egypt, Greece, and Rome, the moral law of God kept the Jews a different people from their neighbors, their rivals, and their subjugators. Indeed, following the period of their complete political prostration, there arose, out of this ancient and battered sensitivity to the eternal law of God, the final refinement that displaced the rival orders that had crushed the people and made them slaves. It is this formulation of what is known as the Christian ethic that has informed the moral conscience of our Western culture. This did not come about in a generation though the impetus that was given to love as the central

dynamic in moral action had clear statement in the discursive writings of the New Testament and the Synoptic Gospels. It took three centuries, however, for the philosophical framework within which it was finally set, to be erected.

The unique theological idea which the Christian religion finally built itself around was not the existence of a deity. The noble prayer of Socrates before his suicide is indication enough of the deep awareness that he, and the culture he so dramatically exemplified, had of the existence of God. Similarly this invention has been able to express itself in all cultures, from the clay idol to the most exalted metaphysical concepts.

The central Christian theological hypothesis is the Incarnation, that mysterious affirmation that the Logos—which partakes of the unqualified nature of pure being—became flesh, which partakes of all the ambiguities of physical being. It says, in effect, that God invaded, intruded, extrapolated Himself into history and time and became en-fleshed in a historical person, Jesus Christ. There is no end of argument as to how this came about, but to those who understand the nature of the Christian tradition there is no question that it is that single fact that represents its *punctum saliens*.

The significance of this can hardly be understood, however, without reference to the intellectual ferment out of which this idea rose to its final formulation. Classical philosophy, of which Plato is both the symbol and the genius, had arisen to dispute the cankering skepticism of the Sophists who had come to the enervating conclusion that since all is flux and change, nothing truly exists. If it did exist man could not know it, because his mental processes perpetually changed; and even if he could know anything he could not communicate it because the minds of others were in restless and unstable flux at every moment. This was dismal in the extreme and relieved only by the somewhat dubious idea that man, even though he too is subject to the universal processes of change, is the only measure that can be had by which everything—including himself—is to be judged.

Into this welter of pessimism Plato projected the notion that there is a world of ideal values that are eternal and changeless and thus above flux and change. The natural world inhabited by man is a shadow cast by this ideal world. Man, therefore, was a shadow of something



above and beyond him but he was not a standard for the measurement of all things. Now the tendency of this classical preoccupation with the changeless and the eternal was to depreciate the significance of history—which is the record of change within time—and of time itself. Also of man who, shadow though he be of an ideal value, still is thrall to time and the changes of history. Hence classical thought eventually petered out in an anti-individualism which was finally exhausted in the skepticism of the Middle Academy.

Roman secularism, of which Cicero was the prophet and Virgil the poet laureate, compensated somewhat for the anti-individualism and antihistoricism of classical thought by declaring that history's significance was seen in *Roma Aeterna*—the frankly secular religion of Augustus Caesar and the Antonines. This was no feeble faith. One needs only to read the meditations of Marcus Aurelius to see the high level of moral dignity and insight to which some of its expositors reached. But it came a cropper when the wings of the eternal eagles were clipped by the Goths, after they had been soiled by the offal of a social order built on slavery. In practice as well as in idea, personality and wealth were debased and the heavy-handed barbarians found their job of destruction an easy one, for the heart had gone out of their victims and they had no stomach for resistance.

Augustine died in 430. He was a witness to the fall of Rome. His father had been a pagan, his mother a Christian, and he learned the rudiments, both of Classicism and of *Roma Aeterna* from his father, and of the Christian revelation from his mother. He became, partly through this fortuitous domestic circumstance and through his own experience as a pagan wastrel and a Christian saint, the bridge that spanned the ruins of Roman secularism in its reach from Classicism to nascent Christianity. He saw in the Incarnation a new principle. God, the eternal and changeless, had entered, by His own initiative, the world of time, change, and flux. Thus the universal had become the particular; the timeless was enfleshed in time. This gave a new meaning to history by smashing its seventy-five-thousand-year cycle and stretching it out into an indefinitely protracted linear dimension. History partook of new significance, since God was operating within time; and man acquired new meaning since the moral significance of this

divine invasion was found in its redemption of man and the conferring of a new status on him.

This is the philosophical idea (or to use the language of these studies, the faith) that gave impetus to a new moral culture that was, at the moment, emerging from the ruins of Classicism and Roman secularism. For this reason, Augustine has been called the first modern man, meaning that he was the first representative of what was implicit in the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. "The word became flesh": that made the difference between elegant despair and the vision of the city of God that was one day to rise above the scattered rubble of the prostrate culture of Rome.

[ 5 ]

Now because there is a moral imperative intrinsic to the faith man gives to God, it was inevitable that it should emerge clearly, once the philosophical basis for that faith was set forth within the particular historic context that fostered it. If then Incarnation is a new principle giving new significance to history and man, it was necessary that it should be reduced to action or to an organon of conduct before it could give moral guidance to the culture that its formulation was initiating. Implicit in the idea of Incarnation was the fact that the initiative was God's and the intention was redemptive, and that these were possible only by what seems to us to have been a self-limitation of God. The word that was used to describe it was *kenosis*—self-emptying. This is perhaps a better word than *self-limitation* since the act of evacuating oneself of power, for example, has a somewhat different suggestion than limiting one's power. At the heart of the redemptive act of God was *kenosis*; voluntary self-emptying in creation and in the redemption of others would then be the highest moral act. This is clearly the central ethical doctrine of the Cross, and it is also the central ethical doctrine of Christian law, and is therefore enjoined upon all those who accept God in the terms that are set forth in the doctrine of the Incarnation.

The advance of this moral ideal over the Sinaitic code is easily seen. On the smoking summit of the mountain God had spoken in arbitrary and unequivocal laws which the people at the mountain's foot were not to question, evade, or defy. Later, when ideas of justice took shape and the effort was made to balance an evil with its appropriate penalty,



the edge of arbitrariness was blunted somewhat, but the redemptive goal was not reached. It was not until love became the motivation for ethical behavior that it was possible for the moral law to become redemptive instead of arbitrary—as in the first stage, or just, as in the second. Thus Emil Brunner has said that “only Christianity is capable of furnishing the basis of a civilization that can rightly be called human. . . . The idea of equality which led to the French Revolution, and produced modern democracy, is also the source of modern Communism. . . . The same epoch which has placed the idea of justice in the center of interest, has also produced that social structure which is the complete negation of all justice, the totalitarian state.” Only under the Christian idea of love (the will-to-good) can “the two principal elements of equality and unlikeness which elsewhere are in conflict with each other”<sup>2</sup> be brought into harmony.

Thus we see that although man, the Sophists notwithstanding to the contrary, is not the measure of all things, he has a rod by which he can measure all moral action. It starts with the low calibrations of pride and moves to the high point where man's will-to-self becomes the apex of his achievement. This is sin, or its source. Only by reversing the process can man be purged of sin, and that means moving in the direction of *kenosis* or the emptying of oneself back down the calibrations to humility. Because a man loves his fellow he seeks justice; because justice is not enough, he seeks redemption. Thus, in terms of this central moral principle which is the ethical parallel to the philosophical principle of Incarnation, only that act is right that is motivated by love, love meaning the voluntary emptying of self in redemptive action.

It is interesting to note the rediscovery of this central principle of the Christian moral order by those who have approached the human problem from other directions. In the September, 1950, *Reader's Digest* there is a discussion of this that begins with the somewhat startling announcement that science has finally discovered love. Psychologists, sociologists, and criminologists have found it the answer to those aberrant types of behavior that involve the breaking of codes and the defiance of customs. The warning is given the reader that this new therapy is not what movies and romantic tales are engrossed with. It

<sup>2</sup> *Christianity and Civilization* (London: Nisbet, 1949), pp. 5, 114, 115, 120.

is not the reflex or instinctual protectiveness of the mother animal, nor the possessiveness of romantic affection, nor parental overconcern. It is a moral attitude designed to enable the object of one's love to find the fulfillment in life he desires. The conclusion of the brief article is as surprising as its opening statement. It seems, we are told, that the scientists are now undertaking to overtake Jesus, and it is all summed up in a familiar word of scripture: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another" (John 13:34). It would have made for clarity, we think, if the qualifying clause Jesus used had been appended: "Even as I have loved you." This was not protective or possessive love; it was perfective. That is the way the command reads.

There are limits, to be sure, to which man, in his own power, can reach. His pride will relentlessly pursue him, converting what looks like the simple will-to-good into palpable egotism. Indeed could he do one utterly and abandoned act of selflessness there would be a whisper, all but inaudible, and to which he would doubtless consent, telling him he had wrought nobly. Thus the power of God must be made available even beyond man's exercise of love. Nevertheless, the great paradoxes of the Christian moral law can only be understood in terms of this principle which is the principle of the Cross. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that abaseth himself shall be exalted." "If any man would come after me [which means, of course, follow in the course Christ charts for the disciple] let him deny himself and take up *his* cross and follow me."

[ 6 ]

The question may properly be raised as to whether the verb *love* can be used in the imperative mood. To command one person to love another may be to demand the impossible or to encourage hypocrisy or affectation. Love is evoked, not compelled. If this is so, then a moral imperative that is felt primarily in the obligation to love may be up against a formidable psychological barrier at the start. It is quite possible that some other religions are less sensitive to moral imperatives and more concerned with ritual practice because they have seen this difficulty and found no way around it. The moral alternatives to love are indifference and hate, neither of which could very comfortably assimilate itself to the religious mood. Therefore "to love" being an impossible



command, and "to ignore or hate" being an evil one, religion assumes an attitude of moral unconcern.

It is helpful to see that there are three religious moods, each one of which finds its expression in religious forms and experiences. The religion of fact is concerned with arbitrary statements of fact and with unequivocal demands for conformity. There is no god but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet. Be converted, infidel dog, or die. This is obviously the form which primitive religions generally take and is the earliest stage of those religions that have subsequently become highly rationalized. The second religious mood is that of fiat: all action follows command. The third religious mood is that of faith. Here action waits on a posture of the soul, or an act of the will.

These three moods: fact, fiat, and faith, may also be designated by familiar grammatical categories. The religion of fact is in the indicative mood; of fiat is in the imperative mood; of faith is in the subjunctive mood. By this third mood we mean the attitude of contingency or hypothesis. It depends not on a statement dogmatically set down, or on a command peremptorily issued, but on an act of faith voluntarily offered.

Now it is certain that intrinsically all religions have these three moods; and that they invoke in their votaries three corresponding attitudes: unquestioning acceptance of dogma, unquestioning acceptance of commands; and an element of faith—weak or strong—in the potency of religion to achieve ends desirable to the participant. This then would also be true of the religion of the Hebrew-Christian tradition. It started as a religion of fact: "In the beginning God"; and moved at once—this in the symbolism of the Creation epic—into the religion of fiat: "And God commanded . . . and it was so." But very soon in its realistic touch on human hearts, it partook of the mode of contingency. The Bible is a very positive book, but it also has its tentativeness. Man is rarely altogether sure about God. Abraham was a confident man when he dispatched his servant to find a wife for Isaac. "Yahweh," he promised, "will send his angel with thee and prosper thy way, and thou shalt take a wife for my son" (Genesis 24:40). But the servant was dubious of the success of his errand and wanted a sign to reassure him. "O Yahweh, if now thou do prosper the way which I go, let it come to pass that the maiden . . . shall say to me . . . drink thou" (24:42-44).

In the mind of man there is always the possibility that God may equivocate, or fail him. The opposite of this is that in the mind of God there must be a similar uncertainty about man. Thus man, confronting the Divine, is always in an ambiguous position due to the nature both of himself and of God.

When, in the famous aria from *Elijah*, the words "*if* with all your hearts ye truly seek Him, ye shall ever surely find Him" are put on the prophet's lips, the case for contingency—or for the subjunctive mood in the religious experience—is accurately put. So when the Fourth Gospel represents Jesus as saying: "*If* ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32); and "*if* therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (8:36); and again "*if* I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto myself" (12:32), the contingent element in the divine-human encounter is being re-emphasized. The will of God and the will of man can coincide only by the voluntary intention of each.

We think that there is discovered here an important principle: the Cross, as the center of the Christian moral obligation, can be put in the imperative mood only after it has passed through the subjunctive. Faith is the posture of the soul poised on hypothesis. The imperative to action depends on the nature of the hypothesis. No faith, no imperative; low or meager faith, a low and uncertain imperative; high faith, viz., that God is the meaning of all that we know, means an acceptance of the moral imperative that is at the heart of the universe. God makes the difference. "According to your faith be it unto you." Thus one who espouses this faith will not willingly allow anything he does to falsify his invention or dull the blade of the moral imperative with which he undertakes to cut his way through the tangled confusion of human relationships. Beyond this negative caution will be his concern to seek only those ways through which he can bring the moral imperative to bear on life. Ultimately he will bring all thought and desire into bondage to love, which is the solution—as we have argued in detail earlier in this book—to the paradox of freedom.

[ 7 ]

This brings us to the second experience that mediates the moral imperative to those who have made God the highest hypothesis. It is



community. The reason for this is clear from the fact that moral action does not occur in a vacuum or in isolation. One person represents unity; two persons create community; community creates moral necessity.

There is a sense in which community is the most important of all the pressures that help to shape the contours of individual life. The attachment of the child to its mother creates the embryo community. The family enlarges it, but ultimately these accidental affiliations give place to the deliberate identifications we must make for ourselves. Nothing so disintegrates the vital ego as the loss of its attachments and the necessity to make shift until new alliances are possible. Loneliness is as terrible as pain. Listen to the words of a young Nazi soldier in a letter printed in *Esprit* (Paris) in March, 1946:

I am twenty-five; I was liberated by the Americans after seven years in the army. I don't know where I am going or what I want. I feel a great emptiness inside me—a longing for my regiment and my division, for that fraternity of battle in which I so long existed, fought, suffered—and which has become another family for me. . . . I saw my comrades die; I saw what I believed in die—that faith in which I lived heroically for many years. . . . I have lived for a great cause which illuminated my whole life, and now everything I see leaves me cold, or disgusts me.

It seems that the important words in that poignant confession concern his sense of loss of "that fraternity . . . in which I so long existed, fought, suffered." Those might indeed be the key words in any man's experience of community. Surely no one who has not known, over a sustained period and in a close relation with others, the elements of struggle and suffering for the fraternity (or community) has ever truly lived.

Our concern, however, is with the way in which the Christian community serves to mediate the moral imperative. The history of this aspect of the Christian tradition is interesting, from the Galilean fellowship to the World Council of Churches, but it is unnecessary to sketch it here. What is more to the point is to indicate that ideally the community reflects in its quadrilateral pattern the four components which have illumined our thinking about God.

It is all-inclusive to those who have bound themselves to God in order to be free. It was early evident to the first fellowship that racial

barriers could no longer have meaning in the community. In Christ there was neither bond nor free—that was the end of an invidious social distinction; Jew nor Greek—that ended a hateful race distinction; barbarian (alien) nor Scythian (enemy)—that ended a spurious isolationism. The intention was not to eradicate differences but to identify similarities. They discovered a synthesis on a higher level—in Christ. Thus they could no longer allow—within the fellowship—disparities of wealth. The first Christian communist experiment in Jerusalem (Acts 4:32-35) was neither accidental nor spectacular. It was the simple expression of community on the economic level. The experiment has been endlessly tried under various auspices and with varying success, but it will always be germane to any community that sets love at its center and accepts it as the moral imperative to which all action must conform. Thus it is that in the Christian community—that which is bound together in a strong fellowship for the benefit of all, as we have described it earlier—by bringing disparate tastes, inclinations, endowments, and intentions into one great purpose, and under one great impulse, becomes the carrier and exemplar of the moral imperative to the other communities of earth.

It is a short step from the idea of inclusiveness to that of cohesion. Only the energy that unites can establish solidarity. The love that as a moral power transcends racial, cultural, economic barriers is the centripetal force that keeps them from granulation. Here also enters the aspect of dynamism that we have seen in God. It is God's power that includes, and unites, even as it is His love that—as a moral imperative to which He also must respond—redeems those who form the community of the Sons of God. It should hardly need saying that if we do not hasten this fellowship, war, under the menace of which these words are being written, will continue to gorge itself on the fragmented body of our world until it is utterly and finally crushed in its bloody jaws.

It is unnecessary for us to bring these studies to a close by pointing out the evidence which, for all our attempts at political unity, shows that the world is still a sundered fellowship. Nor shall we specify the ways in which a hope for the creation of a world community are to be pursued. Much is being said about that. Resistance to it is nothing more nor less than the manifestation of man's pride. His unredeemed ego still



fondles pathetically the childish illusion that he can make his way alone. He feels irritated that he must deal with others like him and dreams vain dreams of self-sufficiency. Thus he keeps trying to close the door against the intrusion of God and his neighbor. In support of this blindness he will point to the prodigious successes he has achieved in the world of nature and he will brashly insist that that is all he needs. And yet he cannot disguise his fears of the tools he has made, and in an unguarded moment he will talk shyly about something greater and higher and more enduring than his giant toys. In spite of himself he feels the need of something he can call God, and of someone he can call neighbor and friend.

Least of all do we feel it necessary to forecast the schedule of man's final capitulation to the invention of God and the fact of community. The present world turmoil is discouraging to diviners, and presentiments of disaster do not yield to anodynes taken by mouth or by mind. It is for this grave reason that men must have faith, a faith that is not partial or feeble, diffuse or indifferent, but that can gather up all life's fragments into an all-inclusive, dynamic, cohesive love. The alternatives are not promising, and to have no faith at all is not to live.

And if there is a difference that points up low faith and high faith, and no faith and death, it is our confidence that it is God, God seen, by those who have looked in His direction, in the face of Jesus Christ and in the community of his friends. It is for this that man—in the pathetic words of the young German soldier—must exist, must fight, and must suffer.

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- 1 - WAR betw Science/Religion is OVER
  - 3 - to Scientist the fact = his faith, to Religioist the faith = his fact
  - 4 - Metaphysics of Naturalism = MORALISTIC  
POSITIVISM: DESCRIPTION of SENSORY PHENOMENA (SENSORY EXPER. = highest being)  
RESOLVED INTO MATHEMATICAL FORMULAS.
  - 6 - EXISTENTIALISM: EVERYTHING EXISTS BECAUSE OF STATES of the MIND.  
NATURALISM: NO CLAIM to INFALLIBILITY OF REASON, but AVAILABILITY as guide
  - 7 - UNIVERSE NOT CLOSED
  - 9 - FAITH: RESOLVE to give highest possible meaning to ALL that we know
  - 10 - " Science cannot avoid Categories of purpose + value  
Relativism = meanings = VALUES
  - 12 - " = HYPOTHESIS tinged w/ austerity (scientist), tinted w/ imagination (Philos.)  
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  - 15 - " Science gives meaning to LIMITED AREA / Philos. to UNLIMITED (Nature / read)
  - 16-17 - SCIENTIST + = COLLEGE, Philos. = LOVER / little of each in everyone
- APPREHENSION OF TRUTH = INDIVISIBLE, EK MORA WILL.